

**TOWARD A MINISTRY OF DIVERSITY AND UNITY: A RENEWED CALL TO  
CULTURAL AUTHENTICITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL WHOLENESS**

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## ABSTRACT

### Toward a Ministry of Diversity and Unity: a Renewed Call to Cultural Authenticity and Cross-cultural Wholeness

by

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One of the most visible changes of the parishes of recent ministry is the growing presence of multi-cultures. Different cultures constantly experience cross-cultural dynamics which challenge ministry to be sensitive to and reflective of the needs and concerns of cross-cultural society. Therefore, the role of ministry in rapidly changing pastoral context should be reexamined continuously to be effective cross-culturally.

This project emerges out of a cross-cultural pastoral experience which provides tools and opportunities to discern critical issues in the ministry and to articulate a methodology for the ministry. Chapter 1 presents introductory information for the project. Chapter 2 then investigates the socio-anthropological understanding of culture and the relationship between Christianity and culture. This chapter is necessary to understand the nature of culture and how culture is related to Christian faith.

Chapter 3 strives to highlight the importance of interdependence and interconnectedness between different cultures in a multicultural context. This chapter is an attempt to provide ministry with theological articulation to serve culturally, ethnically, and racially diversified parishes.

Chapter 4 deals with a case study of a cross-cultural ministry which presents many different practical and concrete issues of interculturalization. This chapter reveals what has to be discussed in a cross-cultural ministry and how cultural difference takes part in the ministry.

Chapter 5, the concluding part of the project, envisions and suggests how ministry can be cross-culturally whole. Such wholeness includes the authenticity of being unique within a cultural tradition, and interdependence through cross-cultural respect and the learning process.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Problem

The vitality of a cross-cultural interaction between different cultures in the parishes of recent years challenges ministry to be carefully sensitive and effectively responsive to the needs of a rapidly changing society of multicultures. Cultural and ethnic diversity of this new pastoral context requires ministry to be able to articulate the necessity of and to envision cultural wholeness which is based upon cultural and ethnic authenticity and interdependence. The issue addressed by this project is how the community of Christian faith can understand the dynamics of cross-cultural interaction in parishes and respond to them with theological and practical direction out of cross-cultural pastoral applications in multicultural and multiracial contexts.

Cross-cultural ministry becomes one of the most critical issues as today's parishes are composed of people from many different cultural and racial backgrounds. The cultural and racial mixture of parishes encourages ministry based upon a mono-cultural assumption to be cross-culturally sensitive and pluralistic in its response to its parishes where a constant interaction between the different cultures happens. In fact, local churches as the focal point of ministry, have recently become so multicultural and multiracial that a clear understanding of the dynamics of interculturalization is

indispensable to ministry, and the theological and practical tools of ministry should be based upon multicultural and pluralistic awareness.

A clear understanding of the dynamics seems not possible without an in-depth study of culture. Culture is the context in which parishes are situated, and it is an initial point where the dynamic of the interaction between the different cultural values, customs, norms, and forms begins. Theological articulation of cross-cultural interaction is a crucial requirement to the ministry, such as providing a ministerial leadership or congregation with a fundamental tool to develop mutual and interdependent understanding of intercultural dynamics. A theological articulation and a cross-cultural ministry are interdependent and reciprocally supportive of one another since one cannot be separated from the other.<sup>1</sup>

Focusing on the issues of cross-cultural ministry, this project examines how it is possible for the churches of multicultural parishes to understand the culture by which they are surrounded, to study the interactive dynamics between the culture and church in a multicultural pastoral context and to develop a cross-culturally holistic ministry with cultural authenticity and interdependence. A cross-culturally holistic ministry is a ministry which recognizes and values the authenticity of a culture and highlights the importance of the

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Kraft, Christianity in Culture (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1979), 64-65.



interdependence of the different cultures in order that the multiculturalized parishes may be able to envision a cultural wholeness where all the different cultures interact in harmony without losing one's own cultural uniqueness and authenticity.

### Chapter Outline

Following an introductory Chapter 1, Chapter 2 investigates the meaning of culture according to a socio-anthropological report. For a cross-cultural ministry, this is an initial step to understanding how culture functions in multicultural parishes. Prior to the understanding of cross-cultural dynamics, clarifying the definition of culture itself is important to further the study since culture is a basic unit of the discussion of interculturalization and pluralistic wholeness. Then, the following is an attempt to analyze a cultural matrix of parishes of multicultures. An investigation of the cultural matrix is necessary to know how the parishes are formulated cross-culturally.<sup>2</sup>

This investigation is followed by an effort to look at how different cultures function in parishes for the purpose of understanding how the existing dynamics of multicultures operate. Investigation of cross-cultural dynamics in parishes is an attempt to understand what are the important issues in the context, and how the ministry can develop a methodology to realize a cultural wholeness. One of the ways in which

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<sup>2</sup>Kraft, 98-99.

the critical issues of cross-cultural parishes are discussed is found in a study of cultural absolutism and cultural pluralism.

Cultural absolutism negates relativity of cultures by absolutizing one culture over an other, and this imperialistic placement of a culture against others nullifies the possibility of an interaction between cultures and the opportunity for cross-cultural ministry. Absolutization of one particular culture's customs, values, and norms causes one not to need to learn from or communicate with those of other cultures since the absolutes of the culture outweigh anyone else's. What cultural absolutism can do to the world of many different multicultural communities is detrimental because it deprives the world of harmonious and interdependent co-existence and provides a violent and imperialistic environment.<sup>3</sup>

Cultural pluralism, however, opens a door for interaction between different cultures. It negates absolutization of a culture over another so that appreciating the differences of other cultures becomes possible and provides a cross-cultural ministry with a room for holistic intercultural dynamics. Relativity of a culture with another includes a reciprocal recognition and understanding between the different cultures,

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<sup>3</sup>Charles Garrison, Two Different Worlds (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988), 75-76.

and this is the beginning point of a cross-cultural ministry.<sup>4</sup> However, relativizing the differences of all the different cultures is not sufficient for the ministry because it is only a beginning point for cultural interaction with reciprocal respect and has a danger of syncretism which can be a serious problem for the ministry. Eventually the ministry has to provide a holistic direction and vision for the multicultural parishes because cultural relativism certainly needs to be supported by something more than relativity of cultures.

Cultural pluralism in this chapter explores more than relativism, which is not sufficient to offer a sense of uniting direction with intercultural harmony and interdependence. Relativism might be able to let people from a culture see the equal value of other cultures, but it has a danger of rationalizing and relativizing universal rights or wrongs into cultural opinions. Cultural pluralism is an attempt to recognize a diversified and pluralistic matrix of the cultures in parishes, but it strives for an holistic and integral interculturalization to provide the ministry with an intercultural bond so that the pluralistic and multicultural parishes will be able to envision a cultural wholeness and sense of one community. As the Bible is a crucial material for Christianity and culture, pluralism will be examined in terms of biblical interpretation and its application in the

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<sup>4</sup>Garrison, 17.

contemporary multicultural pastoral context.<sup>5</sup>

In conclusion of the chapter, the possibility of ethno-cultural authenticity over against ethno-cultural centrism or ethno-cultural absolutism is tested by exploring how Christianity views the relationship between God in Christ and culture. This exploration leads us to preview some of the contemporary theologies in the following chapter, which might be helpful for a cross-cultural ministry with cultural and racial authentication and integration.

Chapter 3 focuses on the theological possibility for a holistic ministry through interculturalization. Since this project focuses on a cross-cultural and pluralistic Christian ministry, it seems important to reflect upon theological implications which deal with interculturalization, and develop theological guidelines with which the ministry can develop tools for cultural authentication and interdependence. The development of the theological tools is an important process in the preparation of setting a foundation of the praxis of practical cross-cultural ministry. Therefore, the theological investigation is focused upon a contextual application of the ministry that it might secure a theological support to work toward cross-cultural wholeness.

To meet the need of theological support, the chapter studies several contemporary theologies which share thoughts on and offer theological implications for the practical

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<sup>5</sup>Garrison, 72.

pastoral issues of cross-cultural ministry. Process theology, based upon Whiteheadian philosophy, highlights the importance of permeability and interdependence. Autochthonous theology from Hispanic American experience affirms and values the importance of homogestalt and advocates a voluntary interaction between the different cultures without giving up one's own cultural uniqueness and authenticity.<sup>6</sup> Theology of Han(한) from Korea endorses the importance of oneness with many differences.<sup>7</sup> Theological emphases from these theologies share crucial contributions to a cross-cultural ministry. Again, all of these theological explorations will be focused on briefly as to how they can interact with the praxis of a cross-cultural ministry.

Chapter 4 concentrates on where cross-cultural ministry happens, based upon the understanding of the dynamics of interculturalization, and the biblical and theological implications for the ministry from the previous chapter. This chapter reveals a unique struggle and opportunity of cross-cultural ministry where a first generation Korean immigrant pastor ministers to a predominantly white middle-class congregation in Sherman Oaks, California, whose previous

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<sup>6</sup>Hector Lopez, "Toward Autochthonous Theological Reflections," lecture delivered at School of Theology at Claremont, Calif., 25 Sept. 1990.

<sup>7</sup>Kang Nam Oh, "Hanism as a Catalyst for Religious Pluralism in Korea," in Hanism as Korean Mind, eds. Sang Yil Kim and Young Chan Ro (Los Angeles: Eastern Academy of Human Science, 1984), 83.

pastors have never been other than white male for about half a century. This chapter also scrutinizes the cross-cultural impact both on the pastor and congregation as they share mutually learning cross-cultural experiences and visions for a holistic cross-cultural ministry in the future. Especially the ministerial issue around the area of authority and leadership in the process of interculturalization is given special attention since it has been one of the most visible places for culture shocks and for growth into pluralistic wholeness. Cross-cultural understanding on authority and leadership in administration, preaching, worship, and pastoral care are discussed as part of contextual reflection on the ministry, and they are, in fact, a crucial part of the struggle and growth of the cross-cultural ministry in Sherman Oaks.

In Chapter 5, the concluding chapter, a cross-cultural ministry is reviewed as a crisis ministry. The word, crisis in Chinese (危機) means "danger" and "opportunity." The rapidly expanding cultural and racial mixture of the pastoral context introduces a sense of risk or danger to the ministry, but these incredible changes open up a new and limitless possibility and opportunity to envision cultural wholeness and the growth of the faith community and all participants in the change. A crisis ministry, therefore, embraces the changes which the ministry faces, and it is to be sensitive to the rapid changes in the pastoral context and to challenge parishes to build a positive and holistic ministerial

application. Therefore, in attempting to renew a call to serve the rapidly multiculturalizing community, a cross-cultural ministry as a crisis ministry faces the changes not as a problem but as an opportunity to adjust and grow interdependently and holistically.

In this spirit, how the ministry with a sensitivity to cultural interdependence can benefit the churches in a pluralistic pastoral context is discussed. The chapter also explores and envisions how the ministry can realize holistic harmony out of the interaction between the different cultural experiences from the cross-cultural pastorate. In addition, the chapter suggests the effectiveness (and necessity) of the ministry through cultural wholeness which is based upon the integration of cultural authenticity, permeability, and interdependence. The chapter also attempts to encourage churches to envision the differences as an opportunity to grow, and not as a problem, but an unprecedented opportunity to develop and celebrate a holistic ministry of oneness with many differences: the wholeness of cultural authentication and integration.

#### Bibliographic Statement

This project has two major parts: theoretical, and practical research on the theme of cross-cultural ministry. The bibliographic resources used in each chapter reflect their contribution in either theoretical or practical reference.

For theoretical references, Charles Kraft's book, Christianity in Culture is one of the major resources. Broad research on the relationship between Christianity and culture is carefully discussed as it attempts to cover major points of understanding the interdynamics between the two. The book thoroughly articulates the definition and the role of culture which has been the environment of Christianity, and the development of the relationship of history is also effectively studied in the book. For the project, the book offers basic and general information as to how culture and Christianity have been interacting and what are the current studies on that interaction. However, the book seems to be weak in presenting sound reasons why Christianity should be a binding faith of different cultures in the world. Kraft clearly views Christianity as a viable religion which might be able to attract all the different cultural communities in the world, yet it does not provide the readers with sufficient reason for that.

Charles Garrison's book Two Different Worlds is an excellent book in terms of clarifying why cultural absolutism is dangerous and harmful for the world. The book spends a good deal of energy on the importance of cultural relativism. As the book begins with an attack against any form of cultural absolutism, the necessity of cultural relativism is introduced as one of the critical educations that humanity must have. In fact, the book is very enlightening as far as its



elaboration of the historical, social, biblical, and theological need for cultural relativism. A thorough investigation is done on this matter. However, Garrison's emphasis on cultural relativism somehow overlooks the importance of the common ground of different cultures. The book unfortunately does not effectively deal with the danger of relativism which can rationalize universal rights and wrongs (for example, cannibalism) into a matter of cultural opinion. The book could have been one of the most effective books for the students of the study on culture if it had explored further rather than absolutizing the relativism of cultures. There are more bibliographic references on the same subject used in the project which are found in Bibliography.

There are few major books used for theological reference for the theoretical part of the project. Process theology, theology of Han(한), and autochthonous theology are mentioned briefly in a search for theological support for cross-cultural ministry. A book written by John Cobb, Jr. and David Griffin, Process Theology, is helpful in extracting theological insight.<sup>8</sup> Especially, its points around the theme of relatedness and interdependence are tools directly helpful for part of the project, as they offer theological foundation for the interdependence of cross-cultural ministry. Process and Reality is used for background and as an indirect reference

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<sup>8</sup>John Cobb, Jr. and David Griffin, Process Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976).

to get in-depth information.<sup>9</sup> Marjorie Suchocki's book, God, Christ, Church shows how process theology and philosophy can be used for a practical theology for the ministry.<sup>10</sup> All of the books in process theology are helpful, but there is no direct reference to the issue of cross-cultural ministry.

Hanism as Korean Mind is one of the effective resources to understand Han(한). Theology of Han, which is developed from the articles of the book, provides this project with important information on how to apply its thought to one as one and one as many. Again, the book, however, is not sufficient to establish a firm and complete theological foundation for the issue of cross-cultural ministry. Autochthonous theology is a new theological movement from Hispanic American community and seems to lack information for the in-depth study of cross-cultural issues. However, the theology is introduced in the project since the core agenda of the theology is crucial to cross-cultural ministry. The major information of the theology is heavily dependent upon the contribution from Hector Lopez who is one of the leading members of this movement.

For the practical part of the project, the materials which directly deal with the issue of cross-cultural ministry especially in the setting of this project are extremely rare.

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<sup>9</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality, eds. David Griffin and Donald Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978).

<sup>10</sup> Marjorie Suchocki, God, Christ, Church (New York: Crossroad, 1988).

The majority of books used for this section are indirect references from which the project finds practical applications. A book written by David Claerbaut, Urban Ministry, gives practical information on the current ministerial setting in the urban context.<sup>11</sup> Socio-economic and political research on different ethnic groups and cultures is an excellent resource for background information on the praxis of cross-cultural ministry. Urban Holmes III has written an important book, Ministry and Imagination, which carefully sorts out the meaning and images of modern ministry and presents valuable insight from which cross-cultural ministry can have some applicable ideas.<sup>12</sup> However, the book requires an intentional bridge-building between his ministerial imagery and the practicality of cross-cultural ministry. Letty Russell edited a fine resource for the ministry, Changing Contexts of Our Faith.<sup>13</sup> The authors in this book reflect a keen awareness of rapid emergence of multicultural society. The book is very effective in terms of describing what is going on in the current pastoral context, yet it does not go beyond description in that it lacks vision and gives no suggestions for the future of

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<sup>11</sup> David Claerbaut, Urban Ministry (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resources Library, 1983).

<sup>12</sup> Urban Holmes, III, Ministry and Imagination (New York: Seabury, 1981).

<sup>13</sup> Letty Russell, ed., Changing Contexts of Our Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

ministry which will likely deal with cross-cultural issues.

### Major Terms

#### Cross-Cultural Ministry

There are several terms in the project which are used frequently and they need to be defined clearly for a better understanding of the thoughts and perspectives of the chapters. First of all, cross-cultural ministry is a type of ministry where more than one culture is interacting. The Bible as a book of divine revelation through many different cultures is a fundamental basis of ministry. The stories and history of the book reflect a series of cross-cultural interactions that a cross-cultural ministry, undoubtedly, continues. Theology as a reflection of the interdynamic of divinity and humanity throughout history is a particular cultural interpretation of Christian faith. Cross-cultural ministry is based upon a practical theology which reflects the cultural interactions between different cultures whose interpretations of the faith are culture-bound and culture-limited. The church becomes one of the most visible cross-cultural institutions recently in America, if not in the whole world. A faith community is formed out of a culture, and yet in the process of growth and witness to the Good News, the church inevitably exposes herself to many different types of cross-cultural experiences. Cross-cultural ministry now

launches its mission from the church with multicultures and their interculturalization.

### Cultural Wholeness

A holistic interculturalization is a cross-cultural ministerial attempt to envision and develop cultural wholeness by cultural interaction. Cultural wholeness is not a cultural uniformity by assimilation. In other words, cultural wholeness negates cultural imperialism in which a dominant culture demolishes a cultural uniqueness and authenticity of other cultures and tries to conform them to what is dominant. Therefore, wholeness opposes attempts to assimilate different cultures into a dominant culture, and encourages harmonious interaction between them that it might achieve cultural interdependence and unity. Cultural wholeness strives for co-existence and interaction between cultural interconnectedness and authentication. It recognizes the presence of cultural pluralism, and yet, seeks interaction, harmony, and interrelatedness of different cultures.

### Holistic Transformation

Holistic transformation is an attempt to envision the possibility of cultural wholeness. This attempt is to prevent cultural absolutism which negates other cultures by assuming a superiority of a particular culture. Holistic transformation realizes the danger of absolutism because it

can abolish the possibility of cultural wholeness. Cultural relativism also is against holistic transformation because it relativizes all the different values and norms of different cultures so that it negates the necessity of wholeness by cross-cultural interactions. Despite the differences of cultures, there are universal moral values of humanity which oversees the relativism of cultures. The inequality of man and woman, the evil of cannibalism, and the discrimination against children and so on, should be some of the examples from certain cultures that challenge human morality. Holistic transformation seeks for changes of the unacceptable to make cultural interdependent interaction and wholeness possible.

#### Scope of Limitations

This project is limited to an audience who experiences cultural diversity, needs to explore the possibility of cultural holistic transformation, and envisions cultural wholeness with cultural authenticity and interdependence. The value of the project will be reduced if one feels no need for a cross-cultural interaction, interdependence, and transformation to wholeness. Therefore, the audience of the project might be limited to those who recognize the complexity of cultural diversity and the need for cross-cultural exploration to bring about viable suggestions to develop the how-to's of holistic interculturalization. Though the project may be useful for those who are outside the church ministry, it

specifically focuses on cross-cultural ministry whose most important agenda is how to pastor a multicultural congregation. Since the context of the project is a ministry whose pastor's cultural background is different from the majority of his congregation, it can be further useful for churches which experience similar cultural interaction.

## CHAPTER 2

## Understanding of Culture and Cross-cultural Ministry

Culture and Christian Faith

Doing theology is a constant contextual process of the interaction between God and humanity. For the Christian tradition, faith has been interconnected with this process within the community of believers from the beginning of the church. The church in the history of cultures has always been a part of a particular culture, and she has been continuously influenced by the surrounding culture. The Bible as a focal resource of Christianity is full of definite cultural experiences through which the divine revelation has been communicated with a particular community of faith. The scriptures, therefore, revealed "a specific and concrete reference to status groups, leaders and followers, movements, trends, classes, and cultural environment"<sup>1</sup> as the context of the revelation. The written revelation itself has been tightly interwoven with the biblical cultures where an intercultural dynamic was very common.

Christian faith, therefore, is indispensably intertwined with culture. Whether a believer of the Christian faith talks about pure abstract theology or down to earth, it is evident that both of them are deeply rooted in a culture in which a believer formulates his/her faith. Christianity, therefore,

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<sup>1</sup>Max L. Stackhouse, "Contextualization, Contextuality, and Contextualism," in One Faith, Many Cultures, ed. Ruy O. Costa (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1988), 4.



cannot be separated from the culture as the context of revelation and interpretation as Neil Brown argues

Faith itself is a network of commitments, attitudes, evaluations, judgement, relationships, official interpretations, actions, beliefs, principles, rules, motives, formulations, intentions, etc., all of which belongs to historical subjects acting within a determinate culture. This is true of biblical authors as it is for the church of today- all faith is culture dependent. Nor is it possible to isolate some essential form of Christianity which can be separated from its 'accidental' details. This does not mean that there are no core elements in Christianity which ensure its continuing identity, but rather that these too should be understood within their particular cultural context.<sup>2</sup>

Understanding one's culture, therefore, is unequivocally important and undeniably necessary to formulate a relevant and cohesive faith of the community of revelation. The formulation of faith is always encompassed by cultural environments to which a believer belongs. Culture as the socio-anthropological ground of the contextualization of faith is a critical concept to understand in order to see how culture and faith interact with each other.

#### Socio-anthropological Understanding of Culture

As early as the nineteenth century in Germany, the term culture had been seriously developed and used by the pioneer anthropologist E. B. Taylor. Later on, the word culture was borrowed and developed by a number of British scholars. At that time, the word culture was used to designate the non-

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<sup>2</sup>Neil Brown, Christians in a Pluralist Society (Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1986), 23.

biologically transmitted heritage of the human being who inevitably belongs to a particular and determinate culture. This definition has become customary to various kinds of studies such as behavioral science, ethics, and sociology as the study of culture has continuously developed. As early as birth, culture is perceived as an inescapable reality, and it becomes a fundamental and germinal context of living that is critical to the formation of who he/she will and can become. Therefore, contextualization of any form of truth or faith begins with a culture into which a person was born.<sup>3</sup>

As human beings are inextricably and totally immersed in culture, they will be born into a socially standardized ways of acting, feeling, and thinking characteristic of their own socio-cultural context.<sup>4</sup> Being born into a socio-cultural context, a person's character and personality is shaped by the constant influence from the culture so that he/she is regarded as a culture-shaped human being. A culture-shaped human being of a particular culture will continue his/her cultural influence upon other people consciously or unconsciously, according to how he/she has been influenced by his/her belief, value system, and norm. This is to say that the human being is also a culture-transmitting agent, that a culture-influenced person will constantly become the culture-

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<sup>3</sup>Charles Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 45-46.

<sup>4</sup>Claerbaut, 163.

influential.<sup>5</sup>

Culture in terms of norms, beliefs, symbols, and values provides a person with the models which determine how he/she thinks, feels, and acts in the context to which he/she belongs. What is just natural in one culture could be unnatural in another cultural setting. The way in which one is governed by the influence of culture is so intrinsic, fundamental, and inescapable that it will be presented to a person as a just natural socio-cultural truism.<sup>6</sup> In Christian history, just natural truisms have been dominated by the theologies of the Western Christian culture. Christianity has been strongly influenced by the cultural development of European and North American theology based upon Augustinian and Cartesian dualism until the twentieth century when the theologies from other parts of the world began to voice their own agenda. Their theological voices now highlight the importance of the co-existence of multicultures.

#### Cultural Matrix

The cultural matrix of communities of faith, having emerged out of a multicultural society in recent eras, clearly heralds the arrival of the end of the cultural and theological monopolization by the dominant cultures from the European and North American context. Multicultural composition and

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<sup>5</sup>Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 47.

<sup>6</sup>Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 48.

pluralistic interculturalization of the recent world are a very visible and rapidly growing phenomenon so that an ethnocentric and monocultural perception of reality is gradually being replaced by the vital presence of a cross-cultural interaction between the different cultures as the world experiences a vital cultural interaction between those people whose cultural background and experience are drastically different from one another. Therefore, the world gradually increases its attention to and recognition of the importance of a multicultural matrix, and the interactions between different cultures which critically necessitate the relevant cross-cultural contextualization of faith for Christianity of the new world.

Inevitably Christian faith can now be valid when it recognizes the presence of diversity and appreciates the difference of cultures. In fact, cultural diversity and cultural interaction have become one of the most visible and active current trends of ministry. As a matter of fact, they represent a stark reality of today's ministry because more than ever, diversity and pluralism of race, ethnic backgrounds, cultural values, and lifestyles become vital factors in many local churches.<sup>7</sup> Obviously a holistic ministry through interculturalization becomes possible with a highly energetic affirmation of the unprecedented diversity

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<sup>7</sup>Stephen Kliewer, How to Live with Diversity in the Local Church (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1987), 1.

of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and this affirmation is capable of introducing a ministerial opportunity to realize cultural wholeness within a multicultural matrix of parishes.

### Cultural Pluralism

Cross-cultural theologizing or ministry would not be possible without liberation from absolutization of ethnocentrism and monoculturism. A cross-cultural ministry in a multicultural parish can begin with a belief that one culture or ethnicity is not to control, oppress, or manipulate others, but rather to learn to appreciate the differences from other cultures and ethnic groups within the faith in interdependence and interconnectedness. Cultural pluralism builds its foundation upon the fact that a particular culture's norm and value can be valid only when they are willing to recognize and appreciate those from other cultures. Naturally, cultural pluralism strives for intercultural bonds by which different cultures can realize cultural wholeness. According to Kraft, cultural validity is

a doctrine developed by anthropology (ordinarily referred to as cultural relativism) that maintains that an observer should be careful to evaluate a culture first in terms of its own values, goals, and focuses before venturing to compare it (either positively or negatively) with any other culture. This doctrine was developed to combat the prevailing ethnocentric tendency to evaluate other cultures to their disadvantage by always focusing on areas of life in which the evaluator's culture has

specialized.<sup>8</sup>

This is to say that cultural validity in the perspective of cultural pluralism focuses upon a couple of perceptions. One is that a person or evaluator from a particular culture has to have an unbiased and authentic cultural awareness of his/her own culture. A second one is that with that unbiased and authentic self awareness of his/her own culture, it becomes possible for him/her to recognize the cultural norms and values from different cultures and to learn from what is different without moralizing or attempting to control other cultures on the basis of ethnocentrism or cultural absolutism.

Cultural pluralism is far different from ignoring or despising the cultures different than his/her own, and this offers a grounding for cross-cultural ministry which necessitates both cultural authenticity and interdependence. Hierarchical comparison between the cultures has been a somewhat unfair tradition in the history of Western civilization which has been evaluating other cultures as primitive, using scientific advancement as a prime criteria to compare the quality and value of culture.<sup>9</sup> Rather, these primitive or underdeveloped cultures, judged by a dominant and oppressive culture have their own valuable and authentic cultural tradition. Frequently, this tradition has been ignored and overlooked when the socio-cultural truism of a

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<sup>8</sup>Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 49.

<sup>9</sup>Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 9.

dominant culture labeled it primitive and underdeveloped. Cultural pluralism tries to highlight an authentic cultural substance of each and every different culture to make interdependent intercultural interaction possible. This recognition of the authenticity is one of the crucial tools for cross-cultural ministry to usher more active, holistic, and productive interaction between cultures into the ministry.

In accordance with cultural pluralism, a particular culture can be valid when it values other cultures that could be radically different. Furthermore, cultural pluralism recognizes, endorses and supports the differences, and applauds interdependent and mutual appreciation between the different cultures. What cultural pluralism can contribute to a society with a multicultural matrix becomes crucially important for cross-cultural ministry as the modern world rapidly changes its cultural composition, and becomes multicultural, especially in urban and suburban areas of America. Needless to say, a pluralistic approach of cultural interdependence, mutual respect, and reciprocal appreciation of different cultures becomes the most fundamental norm for cross-cultural ministry. In fact, the pluralism of cross-cultural ministry liberates the faith community of multicultural parishes from the cultural superiority or inferiority complex which is often caused by cultural absolutism.

### Cultural Absolutism

The concept of cultural pluralism deals with one of the major problems of cross-cultural ministry. That is cultural absolutism which comes from an imperialistic moralization of a dominant culture over others.

[P]eople believe their basic cultural values to be not only superior to those of others but to represent absolute truth. When we have internalized what our culture defines, our beliefs seem factual and self-evident. It is difficult to imagine that right thinking could believe otherwise. Thus the belief that one's truth is absolute is a logical extension of those beliefs.<sup>10</sup>

Cultural superiority, based upon cultural absolutism has no intent to recognize and appreciate what is culturally different from one's own, and this often results in an imperialistic and oppressive manipulation against other cultures. With an imperialistic and oppressive attitude, one particular culture's norm, value system, and lifestyle can be absolutized so that it despises those of other cultures. Eventually, this imperialistic cultural absolutism obliterates any possibility of intercultural activity in the spirit of harmonious interdependence. Nor is it possible for a cross-cultural ministry to launch its mission for cultural wholeness.

The tension and struggle amongst the different cultures and ethnic groups in today's parish of cross-cultural ministry are some of the socio-cultural problems when cultural

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<sup>10</sup> Garrison, 75-76.



absolutism, based upon monoculturism or ethnocentrism,<sup>11</sup> prevents multicultural communities from interacting and mutually respecting each other. Interaction and mutual respect seem possible only when the communities of the different ethnicities and cultures seriously explore what cultural pluralism (of multiculture and of ethno-authenticism<sup>12</sup>) can offer as opposed to cultural absolutism or ethnocentrism which tries to monopolize the opportunity, policies and strategies of intercultural relationship and eventually to control other cultures' values and norms.<sup>13</sup>

According to Garrison, Christian cultural absolutism opposes cultural pluralism because cultural absolutists believe that pluralism challenges and destroys belief in both moral standards and Christian truth when the belief should be

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<sup>11</sup> Ethnocentrism is to put an ethnic group in a superior position, using its own ideas and cultural norms, forms, and behaviors as criteria of judgement over others. This assumed superiority often puts down others by using hierarchical and moralistic standards from one's own culture. This is also based upon absolutization of one culture over against the other as it takes its own cultural values and norms as self-evident truth which should be universally applied to any other culture. See for example, Garrison, 50.

<sup>12</sup> The term, ethno-authenticism will appear in other chapters and will be more fully explained. It describes a position which values an authenticity and uniqueness of each and every different ethnic group and equally respects and values authenticity and uniqueness of other cultures different than one's own. The recognition of ethnic and cultural authenticity, as it may be, depends heavily upon perception and belief of interdependence and interconnectedness of all different cultures and ethnic groups. This term is created and used by the author of this project to enhance communication in this matter.

<sup>13</sup> Neil Brown, 19.

shaped according to a particular culture's norm or value. Often this belief is perceived as the way it should be for everyone, but it is a product of one culture's interpretation of the divine-human interaction. By the same token, the traditional Christian value is not free from a particular cultural influence and this traditional Christianity is now subject to different cultural interpretations as modern society learns that Christian cultural absolutism of the revealed truth does not speak for all the cultures of the world which share different cultural environment to interpret Christianity. In other words, Christianity now has to be reviewed and reinterpreted by all the different cultures. As a matter of fact, this review and reinterpretation set Christianity free from cultural absolutism and make it possible for each and every culture to perceive the truth from their own cultural contexts. A pluralistic and cross-cultural interpretation of different cultures now has an important task, to liberate the form and content of Christian faith from absolutism, and to realize cultural wholeness of authenticity and interdependence.<sup>14</sup>

The absolutization of the Western cultural interpretation of Judeo-Christian culture has been referred to as traditional Christianity. The traditional, however, is rooted in a particular socio-cultural context of European North American civilization. This should be subject to the diversity

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<sup>14</sup> Garrison, 18-19.

of cultural interpretations of Christianity to make itself culturally relevant and pluralistic. When this traditional becomes absolute for the sake of one particular culture's domination or control over the other whose cultural experience is immensely different, it certainly damages the relationships amongst different cultures and ethnic groups. Historically, Christianity has been moralized by the dominant Western cultures throughout the Judeo-Christian history. The result, traditional Christian morality has led the European and North American culture to be "narrow, closed-minded, and defensive."<sup>15</sup> And this moralization has prevented the Western culture from recognizing the value of other cultures and found pluralism and relativity of the different cultures in the world difficult to accept and appreciate.

Understanding the damage done by cultural absolutism is critical to do theology in a cross-cultural world because it practically equips a person to be sensitive to the pluralism of the beliefs and norms of Christian faith in the presence of multi-cultures and multi-ethnic groups. Pluralistic society and parishes, indeed, require a keen awareness of the differences of cultures and a deep understanding of the dynamics of interculturalization. In a cross-cultural parish, ministry will not succeed if it cannot value the differences of different cultures as a blessing and opportunity for cross-cultural ministry. The multicultural matrix that the modern

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<sup>15</sup> Garrison, 30.

world and parishes experience will be a great opportunity for cross-cultural ministry since it offers an unprecedented multicultural parish paradigm where the Christian message can be communicated and interpreted interdependently between the cultures.

### Cultural Pluralism and the Bible

The Bible as the major resource of Christian faith is written revelation through a set of the different cultures of biblical communities. How one from a different culture interprets the book certainly lays a cornerstone from which a cross-cultural theology can develop. It seems important to be aware of the fact that the revealed truth in a biblical community, as an event, which occurred at a particular time and place is neither absolute nor relative. It is an event. It only stays a neutral event, however, until the event is translated into a language and culture of a particular community, then it is influenced by and developed in that culture. The outsiders of different cultures other than the community of the revelation interculturalize the revelation and make it relevant to and communicable with their own culture. The interculturalization within the revelation is an essential resource of pluralistic interpretation of faith, and it benefits all believers because it is capable of liberating the Bible from the imprisonment of the absolute interpretation of one culture.

The written revelation is obviously not free from the cultural norms and values of the communities. To make the revelation relevant cross-culturally, cultural pluralism has to take a critical role in interpreting the stories from the cultures of biblical communities.

Within this culture [that of the Biblical communities], social interaction would sustain the revelation as real and true. It is important to remember that this need for a culture to define truth is a characteristic of all knowledge systems and not just religion or Christianity. The people who participated in this culture would be human and their social processes human thus relative. It was to provide a culture to sustain the revelation that God developed the Jewish nation. The life of Christ led to the emergence of Christian culture that refers to the culture of Christians who provided the social base for sustaining the truth of God's revelation after Jesus.<sup>16</sup>

This biblical pluralism for cultural interpretation does not intend to pervert the revelation as an event in a particular culture, but to communicate the revelation through different cultural understandings and make the revelation relevant and cohesive in each culture. Cultural pluralism appreciates the beliefs, norms, and values of the cultural interpretation of the revelation by the biblical communities, and it strives for liberating Christian faith from the monopolized and absolutized interpretation of the faith by the dominant Western civilization which is now challenged by the various voices from other parts of the world. The concept of cultural pluralism in the context of cross-cultural ministry is to

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<sup>16</sup> Garrison, 125.

recover a capacity to see the world the way others do and to discover an initial resource of ministry from people "who look at the world in ways very different from our own."<sup>17</sup>

The recovery of the authentic interpretation of the revelation and making the revelation relevant to a culture can be achieved by several ways. As a matter of fact, the process of recovery and making the revelation relevant cross-culturally is an indispensable step for cross-cultural ministry. One of the ways in which the process can happen is to rediscover the biblical culture which was covered with and lost by the cultural domination of Greco-Roman and Western cultures. The ministry should also reexamine the taken-for-granted way of interpretation of the Bible by the dominant culture and theology of absolutism. A thorough understanding of the culture that experienced and interpreted the events of the revelation should be a fundamental base for the ministry to open up a possibility of cross-culturally interactive interpretation of the Bible. This cross-cultural interactive interpretation will be a very complicated process, but the necessity is never in doubt as theological and pastoral dialogues amongst the people from different parts of the world become more active, necessary, and influential. People from the different cultures often have radically different eyes to read and interpret the Bible, and this difference has

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<sup>17</sup> Robert McAfee Brown, Unexpected News (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 12.

to be discussed and shared by everyone who has opportunity to experience it.

The traditional Christianity of the European and North American churches gradually becomes a part of the theologies of the world. Third world theology, not as third rated but as non-European/North American, surfaced as a powerful voice which has radically different ways of the interpretation of the Bible than that of the Western culture. The theologies of the oppressed and marginalized, such as women, blacks, Hispanics, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and Asians have also demonstrated a nonconventional way to interpret the Bible. A valuable lesson for cross-cultural ministry in response to the emergence of the theology of the oppressed and marginalized is that a cross-cultural ministry should carefully examine the authentic interpretation of the revelation in its own cultural context and let the authentic interpretation take its place in the interdependent and holistic development of cross-cultural wholeness.

#### Diversity and Commonality for Cross-cultural Ministry

A ministry of cultural wholeness is to minister to people from many different cultures in a world broken by various types of cultural absolutism and ethnocentric moralities. In response to the brokenness, ministry is to recover wholeness by the harmony of oneness with many differences and to offer the people from many different cultures a hope of unity with

the spirit of cultural interconnectedness and interdependence. Cross-cultural ministry affirmatively foresees a possibility of wholeness out of the segregated ethnocentric and monocultural absolutism by visualizing, facilitating, and promoting a harmonious interaction between the different cultures without losing one's own cultural authenticity or uniqueness.

A cross-cultural ministry reaffirms the fact that the indigenous interpretations from the different cultures of today's parishes can commonly share the Christian message from the teachings and life of Jesus. Within the reaffirmation, the ministry does envision a Christian bond which is capable of holding the people from different cultures together. The ministry, therefore, strives to create a ground of commonality of being Christian without losing one's authenticity as a culture-shaped and culture-transmitting person.

On the basis of cultural pluralism and wholeness, interculturalism is possible because, even though human beings are diverse culturally and ethnically, there are several fundamental commonalities shared by all human beings which are responsible for uniting harmony and interdependence despite the cultural differences in many aspects of life. Cross-cultural ministry is possible because the communities of faith from the pluralistic world somehow share the common grounds of human mind where the differences can be communicated and set aside for experiencing harmonious interactions.



To find out the commonalities, modern anthropologists invest a lot of effort, and one of the leading anthropologists came up with a number of commonalities among human beings, which define cultural species. There are four major items that unite human beings as the species of culture. And these are from basic human experiences: biological, psychological, spiritual, and socio-cultural.<sup>18</sup> The biological similarities of human beings are a lot more impressive than the biological differences that classify human beings according to intrinsic differences between races. The biological difference is not widely accepted by any anthropological and cultural studies. It is obvious that there are distinctive differences between the races. Colors of skin, facial features, stature and so on represent a definite difference in appearance, but it is generally true that people from different races share the same human anatomy and physiology.<sup>19</sup>

More impressively than the biological commonality of human beings, there is a psychological commonality that makes intercultural activity possible. This psychological commonality is often described in anthropological studies as psychic unity of mankind, which means that regardless of the difference in cultures, there are resemblances of their reasoning, thinking, and behaving according to the value and norm of their cultures. This proves that there are cultural

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<sup>18</sup> Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 84.

<sup>19</sup> Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 84.

similarities based upon the people's thought processes within their particular cultures. Not only Goldshmidt and other anthropo-sociologists, such as Nida and Kluckhohn, but major psychologists like Maslow agree that the commonality is deeply rooted in various levels of psychological needs which are basic to all human beings, regardless of their cultural and racial backgrounds.<sup>20</sup>

Within the commonalities of the different races and cultures of human beings, there are several basic psychological needs which are almost universally shared by human beings, according to Maslow. Safety need is one of them. A need for security, freedom from fear, from anxiety, a need for order and structure, and a need for predictability to secure the greatest possibility of life are fundamental and common to all human beings no matter which culture and race one belongs to. The need for belonging and love are other universal psychological commonalities, found across the borderlines of various kinds of cultures. A sense of community and being loved is not confined to a particular culture. It is, rather, demanded by all humankind, and without doubt, it is true to all cultures. Finally, Maslow talks about esteem needs, which is basically a psychological desire that all of human beings share. An esteem need is a desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for mastery and competence, and for freedom and independence. In

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<sup>20</sup> Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 85.

the thought processes of every culture, it seems universally true that the human being has a desire to secure his/her esteem by strength and prestigious reputation.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the differences of cultures and races of humankind, all of humanity share another universal commonality. That is their spiritual characteristics. The mystery of life and death which is beyond the capacity of reason is not monopolized by a particular culture. The mystery is rather an ultimate and indispensable concern for all human beings to find the meaning of life. In the midst of the mystery, human beings yearn for divine presence in their lives, and there seems to be a universal desire, shared by all human beings, to interact with their God. The divine being has been named by human beings as differently as Ultimate Being, Shinto, God, Hananim, Alla, Buddha, and so on, but human beings share the essence of the divinity which they worship and from which they find the meaning of life in spite of the differences of cultural norms, values, forms, and lifestyles.

The development and maintenance of society and culture has demonstrated a great deal of socio-cultural similarities of human beings. And the similarities are mainly caused by the commonalities in biological, psychological, and spiritual realms.

The organization of socio-cultural structures to

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<sup>21</sup> Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 86.

meet biological, psychological, and spiritual needs appears either to uncover or to create a series of additional needs that we may label separately as socio-cultural needs. Culture responds to these needs by providing such things as the organization of social activity, communication, social control, and the indoctrination of succeeding generations in the cultural system.<sup>22</sup>

The organizational effort of a socio-cultural entity is based upon common needs, and a culture, in a socio-cultural process of meeting similar needs, shares a lot of commonalities with others. The commonality in socio-cultural realms is a strong grounding for the possibility of cross-cultural activities. In fact, the socio-cultural similarity opens up an opportunity to see how a cross-cultural interaction between the different cultures might benefit people in a multicultural matrix. Needless to say, it is not proper to argue that there will not be any difficulty in intercultural activity because of the benefit from the similarity, but it is very clear that the commonality provides a multicultural society with a basis of cross-cultural interaction and interdependent understanding between the different cultures. However, the difficulty in intercultural activity is a necessary process to realize cultural wholeness.

The diversity and commonality of human cultures show what ministry in a cross-cultural parish has to learn constantly from the forms, functions, norms, and values of different cultures, and that a cross-cultural ministry has to be very

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<sup>22</sup> Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 87.

attentive to the interactions and interdependent interpretations of the diversity. The dynamics of interculturalization are often found in the matrix of cultural diversities. This interculturalization challenges the validity of cultural absolutism and reaffirms human commonality which constitutes the pluralism of cultures with a room for culturally interactive and holistic communication.

The affirmative recognition of cultural diversity or pluralism will enable the ministry to secure room for encountering different cultures without being judgmental, moralizing, or imposing. The affirmative recognition validates the necessity of readjustment of a culture to understand others and to make intercultural dynamics productive and educational. The danger of cultural absolutism should be checked and revised so that each culture in a multicultural context accepts the fact that its norms, values, forms, and customs are not a universal criterion to judge all other cultures, but they are the grounding of the authentic cultural identity which is a part of many.

### God and Culture

For a ministry in a cross-cultural parish, it is imperative to recognize the plurality or relativism of different cultures, and yet, the ministry cannot stay in the stage of recognizing relativity and plurality. A cross-cultural ministry should go beyond cultural relativity and

plurality. In other words, when a cross-cultural ministry serves people from the different cultural backgrounds, it should recognize the authentic existence of the differences, but it must be able to provide something that can bind people together for the Christian mission. The ministry is based upon the appreciation of cultural differences and interdependence, but it always reaffirms that there is a Christian evangelistic persuasion which is capable of offering a holistic direction and that different cultures can come together as Christians with many different cultural backgrounds.

One of the common grounds for interculturalization that a cross-cultural ministry can offer, is found in how it views and analyzes the interaction between God and humanity in culture. Cross-cultural view towards the question of how God is involved in culture will share some similarities with the familiar typology of H. Richard Niebuhr which describes the variety of Christian perspectives on the relationship between Christ and culture. The interdynamics of the relationship are one of the crucial theological insights that a cross-cultural ministry has to understand.

Given these two complex realities-Christ and culture- an infinite dialogue must develop in the Christian conscience and the Christian community.... The dialogue proceeds with denials and affirmations, reconstructions, compromises, and new denials. Neither individual nor church can come to a stopping-place in the endless search for an answer

which will not provoke a new rejoinder.<sup>23</sup>

This complicated relationship between divinity and humanity in a culture has a specification of its usage in the cross-cultural and pluralistic world. Most of cultures have their own theism and interaction with the culture, and however they name their God, the essence of divinity is generally shared by the cultures. Eternity, creativity, power and so on, will be common in the description of the deity of their God.<sup>24</sup> In the experience of a Christian cross-cultural ministry, however, God's interaction with human cultures is primarily revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the relationship between God and culture will further concentrate on how God works in culture, and how culture interprets the role of God in this relationship. This study hopefully will provide a cross-cultural ministry with a viable understanding of God-culture interdynamics.

There are four major thoughts as to God-human cultural interdynamics, according to Kraft.<sup>25</sup> The interdynamics share a similar typology of H. Richard Niebuhr. God as the Creator is responsible for the existence of human beings, and it is safe to assume that, from the very beginning of human existence, there was a culture. As soon as humankind became

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<sup>23</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 39-44.

<sup>24</sup> Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 103-04.

<sup>25</sup> Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 108-15.

capable of creating history, there has been a constant exploration to understand how the divine interaction with cultural values, thinking, behavior, and lifestyles has been interpreted and appreciated. This inquiry causes questions, such as, "How is God related to culture?" "Is God totally other to their culture?" "Is God negative or positive?" or "Is God the product of culture?"

One of the positions to describe the relationship is God-against-culture. This position considers that being Christian is to love God and hate the world, i.e., culture. This position argues that God is against the world and that it would not be possible for one to love God and the world at the same time. This position is supported theologically by Augustinian and Cartesian dualism which separates what is divine completely from human. Otherness of God is also one of the theological traits of the dualism, and it certainly demolishes any possibility of God-culture activity in a harmonious and interdependent spirit. The world is temporary and passing-by, and it is full of darkness of human traits, such as lust, greed, hatred, and evil and that divinity is against the world, i.e., culture outside the church.<sup>26</sup>

This position excerpts parts of the Bible which identify the world as a place of sin and interprets them to support their view of God against culture. A few verses of John's

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<sup>26</sup> Niebuhr, 47-49.



gospel indicate the world is full of darkness;<sup>27</sup> Jesus said that his disciples should not belong to this world because the world hates them.<sup>28</sup> Also in the letters of John, there are also strong indications that the world is described as "the evil one" from which the believers have to dissociate themselves.<sup>29</sup>

In the beginning of the history of Christianity, there had been some strong antagonism, widespread in the early church, especially antagonism of the early Christians toward Jewish culture. Throughout Christian history there have been movements that have advocated physical and spiritual separation from the world. In contemporary Christianity, an antagonism to separate divinity from the world can be found in a variety of fundamental (Pentecostal) churches where the world and its culture are viewed as a negative environment.<sup>30</sup> From this point of view, the church is Noah's Ark by which believers can escape from the world, "the evil one."

This position certainly cannot be a viable option for cross-cultural ministry because the ministry cannot take place if it urges the people to hate the world which is full of different cultures. This impossibility seems to be very obvious for several reasons. One of them is that it deprives

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<sup>27</sup> John 1:5

<sup>28</sup> John 15:19

<sup>29</sup> 1 John 2:15 ; 5:19

<sup>30</sup> Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 105.

the ministry of the possibility of positive cross-cultural interaction in a pluralistic pastoral context. Since the God-against-culture position dissociates itself from culture, it also invalidates a ministerial effort to be culturally interdependent or interrelated. Neither is it possible for a person to run away from human cultures, nor is it possible for a person to be a culture-shaped and at the same time, a culture-transmitting human being. This position can create a dilemma for the ministry by negating the value and necessity of cultural wholeness in a multicultural context.

God-in-culture is a second position to describe the relationship between God and culture. This position views God to be contained within culture. God-in-culture is rather an opposite extreme of the previous position. This view has the danger of an extreme relativization of cultures that can result in a complete relativization of God within culture. This complete relativization could draw a conclusion that God is completely bound in culture, and that God is, in fact, a product of culture which has little or no divine characteristics, value, or power. According to this radical view, God is created by the people of deity-producing culture, rather than that the people are created in God's image.

Even if God is viewed as the Creator, full of divine characteristics, another danger arises. This danger is rooted in cultural absolutism because it may attempt to claim a monopolization and complete endorsement from God for the sake

of one particular culture over against others.

Within Christianity a God-endorsing-my-culture perspective often stems from the God-against-culture position. It sees God as either creating, gradually developing, or endorsing a given culture or subculture, and ordaining that all people everywhere if they are to be Christian be converted thereto. This concept may take the form of an absolutization of some historical culture such as Hebrew, Greco-Roman (often referred to these contexts as 'first-century Christian culture' or 'New Testament culture') or, more often, in the last few centuries, some form or modification of western civilization. Or it may refer simply to 'Christian culture' (which, insofar as it is defined at all, usually looks very western) or employ a term like 'biblical culture' (as if the biblical records portrayed a cultural unity).<sup>31</sup>

The matrix of absolutization and generalization of the values, norms, and lifestyles of a particular culture, according to this view, causes a parochial and independent attitude so that a culture becomes only capable of seeing the form of culture rather than functions and motives. So often, labeling and stereotyping against other cultures are the examples of this view. A label "Christian" is not and should not be confined to a standard, set by one culture's form because being Christian is not confined to one culture, but it is an intercultural identity. Even though Christianity was initially influenced and nurtured by the first-century Jewish culture, it was meant to be shared with other cultures and to be interpreted according to the uniqueness or authenticity of a particular culture.

Cross-cultural ministry should refuse any attempt to

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<sup>31</sup> Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 107.

monopolize the interpretation of the relationship between God and culture and deny any form of absolutization of one culture out of the God-endorsing-my-culture-only perception. Therefore, the position of God-in-culture clearly disapproves the urgent necessity of interdependence of the different cultures which happens to be one of the important groundings of a cross-cultural ministry.

A third position is the God-above-culture position which emphasizes the otherness of God from culture. This is to say that God is so transcendental to any conceivable being that culture has no capacity to understand how God relates to the world. Deism and Augustinian and Cartesian dualism in the Western culture might be part of the examples of this position since they often perceived that God was above culture and indifferent with human beings. According to Sahakian, a historian of the Western philosophy, this position was developed and elaborated by the Greek philosophy whose theism is based upon the total otherness of God. Aristotelian theism, for instance, says that God, indeed, is the Unmoved Mover who has nothing to do with what is happening to human beings.<sup>32</sup> God is so above that there is a complete separation between God and humanity, and the separation cannot be bridged.

This complete separation is reflected in how the church

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<sup>32</sup> William S. Sahakian, History of Philosophy (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968), 70.

relates herself to the world. The church as a community of the twice born becomes an independent and separated institution from the world, i.e., culture of the once born. The community of the twice born by the Spirit puts itself either above or at the center of its environment, that is, culture. This bifurcation certainly dissociates the church and ministry from the world so that a productive and interdependent interaction between the church and the world cannot be happening.<sup>33</sup>

Obviously, the third position cannot support a cross-cultural ministry because it, first, abolishes the theological validity of an intrinsically relational dynamic between God and culture. Total absence of interaction between God and humanity denies just about any kind of pastoral grounds which requires an intimate relationship between God and the community of faith in their cultural context. This position might be valid for a pure scientific and sociological study to explore the dynamics of intercultural activities in a multicultural world which does not necessitate a divine interaction with culture. However, the presence and intimate participation of God in the world is an indispensable and fundamental premise to ministry. Secondly, the position can put Christians into a trap of dualism. Since God is absolutely other from the world, Christians naturally become dualists who experience distance between the total depravity

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<sup>33</sup> Niebuhr, 116-17.

of humanity and the absolute righteousness of God. A journey between these two radically different natures requires Christians in culture to be converted and transformed from that depravity to righteousness.<sup>34</sup>

It is obvious that this is one of the least possible options that the ministry could consider. The God-above-culture position views culture through a conversionistic and judgmental theology with a premise that culture is basically corrupt and unjust. Culture, however, is not an object to be judged and moralized but continuous and interactive events between God and humanity where there have been reciprocal struggles, suffering, reconciliation, and celebration. According to the different forms, values, functions, and beliefs of the different cultures, the outlook of how people relate to each other is different, and each and every culture is a unique and authentic event in itself through which people experience interaction with God. There is another option for a cross-cultural ministry to search for a viable and appropriate theism in multicultural parish.

Kraft suggests that the God-above-but-through-culture position could be the other option. This position negates both that God is a product of culture, so that God is a completely culture bound being, and that God is totally other, away, and remote from culture. This position shares thoughts with a dipolar theism which recognizes God's freedom to be above

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<sup>34</sup> Niebuhr, 194-95.

culture, and yet, God is working and interacting within culture to overcome brokenness and sinfulness. God, throughout the history of the God-humanity relationship, has constantly interacted with humanity through the many cultures. From the Old Testament to the ministry of Jesus and the apostles, the Bible is full of the saga of interaction where God constantly works with the community of faith in culture. The biblical communities from numerous cultures have had different and unique cultural contexts through which they have experienced divine revelation in their particular and determinate cultures.

This position confirms that God is above culture, and "yet God has freely chosen to employ human culture and at major points to limit God-self to the capacities of culture in God's interaction with people."<sup>35</sup> This interaction takes culture positively as a context of working with one another toward the kingdom of God where a complete redemption for all creation is realized. On this journey toward the kingdom, a hopeful attitude toward culture might be found when the church as a sign of the kingdom does not keep herself away from culture but when she strives for a harmonious interaction between "God's work in Christ and man's work in culture."<sup>36</sup>

A cross-cultural ministry affirms the God-above-but-through-culture position since it clearly provides theological

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<sup>35</sup> Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 115.

<sup>36</sup> Niebuhr, 190.

foundation for the ministry. This position perceives culture as the continuous events of interaction between God and humanity. And this interaction continues to take place in multicultural parishes where the variety of how God works with the different people from the different cultures is vitally present. The different forms, values, and functions show the countless way in which God uses the different cultures to interact with people. The vitality of the ministry comes from recognizing the divine participation in the different cultures in their own uniqueness and authenticity, and that recognition capacitates the ministry to encourage people to secure and appreciate a sense of cultural interdependence, reciprocal respect, and mutual growth into the wholeness. The God-above-but-through-culture also enables people from different cultures to minister to each other to work toward oneness with many differences in a parish of a multicultural matrix.



## CHAPTER 3

## Theologies toward Holistic Cross-cultural Ministry

One of the current theological trends in recent decades is an effort to highlight and value the importance of relatedness or interwovenness. This trend negates any form of extreme independence, that every existence seems to be absolutely free from being related to anything other than itself. This relatedness or interwovenness encourages different cultures to be mutually responsible and understanding as they become more acutely aware that they are interrelated and interconnected to each other in every aspect of life. Out of the many current theologies which have surfaced from the different parts of the world, there are few contemporary theologies which offer a very helpful tool for the practice of cross-cultural ministry.

Practical ministry needs theological support, and theology without a practical application is not valid. Therefore, it is not conceivable to separate one from the other because the theoretical interest or systematic pursuit of knowledge is a product of contextual experience in practice.<sup>1</sup> Experience and its theoretical reflection are intertwined, and likewise, theology and ministry are reciprocally indispensable from one another. It is, therefore, important for this project to reflect upon theological research which might be helpful to formulate a

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<sup>1</sup>Robert McAfee Brown, Unexpected News, 25.

systematic foundation for the praxis of ministry.

In this chapter, three theologies are discussed in search of a theological foundation for a cross-cultural ministry. Each theology will be introduced briefly and elaborated under separate titles. They are process theology, autochthonous theology, and the theology of Han. These theologies from different cultural backgrounds share some important theological guidelines and give voice to the necessity of cross-cultural understanding. Each theology is be researched from a cross-cultural viewpoint, and some brief researches focus on their concrete contributions to the ministry. Some valuable theological suggestions are contextually applicable for a practical cross-cultural ministry when they are situated in a mixture of multicultures and their cross-cultural interactions.

Process theology has a lot of theological insights to offer for a cross-cultural ministry, but there are several thoughts whose contributions to the ministry are extremely valuable. First of all, the concept of God is very important since it negates the traditional Cartesian dualism which endorses a separation of God from the world and which causes segregation amongst the different cultures. It is critical for a cross-cultural ministry to value a theism which validates an intimate relationship between God and the world because it provides the ministry with a theological grounding for an interrelational base amongst the different cultures of

parishes. The intimate relationship between God and creation in process theology creates a model of similar relationship between different cultures.

Creative transformation is another important concept of process theology, showing an example of being open and permeable for transformation and growth. Creative transformation offers an openness for the future with a willingness to adjust and revise for the changes that the ministry must face as its pastoral context rapidly changes through the emerging interaction of many different cultures. Finally, the concept of interdependence of process theology will be discussed as it provides the ministry with a very crucial tool for interdependence of the different cultures of parishes of the ministry. Process thought of interdependence will be a critical tool for the ministry to interact among the different cultures without imperialism and egoistic cultural centralism.

Theology of Han originated in the Korean experience. Han (한) in this project is different from han (한) which is known as a dominant feeling of defeat, resignation, and nothingness of the oppressed or marginalized. Throughout the history of Korea, this feeling of han has accumulated in the hearts of the oppressed by the political and socio-economic exploitation by the oppressors.<sup>2</sup> Along with Latin American liberation

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<sup>2</sup>Nam Dong Suh, "Toward a Theology of Han," in Minjung Theology, ed. Commission on Theological Concerns, Christian Conference of Asia (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981), 58.

theology, Black theology, and feminist theology, Minjung theology from Korea is a voice for the oppressed or the marginalized and finds its theological foundation from han.

The theology of Han(한) being different from han, is another traditional Korean thought which has built a theological foundation on cultural wholeness as Han has presented it to Korean minds, the importance of being one and many and of being many at the same time, one. The theology of Han has a very valuable theism for a cross-cultural ministry. Hanunim, a Korean concept of God will be examined in the light of a holistic approach to the oneness of God and creation and to that of different cultures and races.

The theological approach of Han to the wholeness of God and creation and between different cultures can be achieved by rejecting a cultural separation by dualistic exclusivism. This rejection is supported by how the theology of Han presents cultural wholeness by pluralism and inclusiveness. Han, one of the traditional spiritual foundations of the Korean people, is a very efficient tool for a cross-cultural ministry, that envisions how han, a feeling of resentment and anger against the oppressor, can be transformed into interdependent love with justice. As a matter of fact, Han can motivate the people from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds to look beyond their ethnocentric resentment against other peoples and to widen their faith horizon to be able to embrace others with a spirit of interdependence and

authenticity of culture and ethnicity.

Autochthonous theology is not one of the major theological voices but its theological contributions to a cross-cultural ministry are as important as those from other theologies. Autochthonous theology is a theological reflection from the Hispanic Americans whose experience of a cross-cultural impact has been influenced by socio-economic and political oppression and by cultural discrimination. Despite the oppression and discrimination, the Hispanic community develops an authentic, autochthonous theological voice. Through the theological voice, they emphasize the importance of being authentic and being interdependent to their community and communities from different cultural backgrounds. This emphasis is one of the crucial contributions from Hispanic theology to a cross-cultural ministry.

### Process Theology

Process theology has emerged from two major impacts on the recent history of the world, according to Ewert H. Cousins.<sup>3</sup> One impact was the First World War which destroyed the optimism of the nineteenth century. The optimism of moral improvement and the progress of faith of humankind became invalid as the world experienced unspeakable tragedy. The

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<sup>3</sup>Ewert H. Cousins, "Process Models in Culture, Philosophy, and Theology," in Process Theology, ed. Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Newman, 1971), 3-5.

shattered optimism by the War resulted in a neo-orthodox theology which focused on the dark side of human nature. The neo-orthodoxical theology occupied the first half of the twentieth century. Scientific development after the War was another impact. Especially Darwin's theory of evolution and Einstein's theory of relativity set a milestone in changing the world's view of existence. Theologians and philosophers, such as Teilhard, Whitehead, Hartshorne, and Cobb were influenced by the trend and formulated process theology.<sup>4</sup>

For process theology, everything is in process. Perhaps "All things flow" might be an initial and general description of a fundamental premise of the theology. This flow or the flux of things as a movement of process has substance as its content.<sup>5</sup> Including God, the theology negates any possibility of an absolutely fixed existence. Every conceivable being is in a fluency of either conspescence or transition. The flux of every existence represents either a constant process of conspescence, which transforms a particular existence to its maximum creativity, or a perptpetual perishing process into the past.<sup>6</sup> This means that any kind of an absolutized belief, which rejects the possibility of change or creative transformation, is not acceptable by the theology. "There are unchanging principles of process and abstract forms. But to

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<sup>4</sup>Cousins, 4.

<sup>5</sup>Whitehead, Process and Reality, 208-09.

<sup>6</sup>Whitehead, Process and Reality, 210.

be actual is to be a process."<sup>7</sup> Any event is a process of actualization of countless possibilities, and one of the aspects of God in process thought is

a primordial envisagement of the pure possibilities. They are envisaged with appetite that they be actualized in the world. The actualization of novel possibilities generally increases the enjoyment of experience; for the variety of possibilities that are actualized in an experience, and the element of novelty lends zest and intensity of enjoyment...the divine reality is understood to be the ground of novelty.<sup>8</sup>

God as the ground of novelty opens up countless possibilities of freedom and creativity for all beings in a constant process of actualization, which includes the process of transition and concrescence. The process of transition and concrescence, which means becoming concrete makes beliefs, norms, or values of culture open to changes from the different possibilities of different contexts. Each and every belief, culture, or ethnicity will have a self-determining experience, but this self-determining experience will be constantly influenced by the process of transition and the process of concrescence in which others with their belief or culture or ethnicity also participate.<sup>9</sup> The process of transition and concrescence which is undergirded by the divine source of order and novelty, is one of paramount importance in cross-cultural ministry. It is so because the process of transition

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<sup>7</sup> Cobb and Griffin, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Cobb and Griffin, 28.

<sup>9</sup> Cobb and Griffin, 17.

and concrescence enables the ministry to be culturally and theologically sensitive to the transition of pastoral context. With this sensitivity, a cross-cultural ministry might be affirmatively willing to adjust itself to the cultural context of parishes. And in the process of adjustment, the ministry can constantly re-articulate the definition and role of cross-cultural ministry in the course of actualizing the positive and holistic possibilities of interculturalization.

The dualistic understanding of history of traditional Augustinian theism is no longer conceivable in process theology. For Whitehead, it is impossible to accept the notion of separation between vacuous actuality and subjective experience. Dualism negates the concrete relationship between God and the world, and any entity which is totally other to the actuality of experience, an occasion of enjoyment, is not cohesive for process thought.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, process theology emphasizes relational theism.

God-relatedness is constitutive of every occasion of experience. This does not restrict the freedom of the occasion. On the contrary, apart from God there would be no freedom. If we could think at all of a world apart from God, it would be a world of repetition lapsing into lesser and lesser forms of order according to the principle of entropy. What happened in each occasion could only be declining outgrowth of what had happened before. It is God who, by confronting the world with unrealized opportunities, opens up a space for freedom and self-creativity.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Cobb and Griffin, 18.

<sup>11</sup> Cobb and Griffin, 29.



The intimate relationship of God with the world endorses that God is once the source of novelty, which is an actualization of possibility and God's objectification in the actual world, and which continues to lure and persuade for better actualization.<sup>12</sup> God's intimate relationship also becomes a very important model for a cross-cultural ministry in multicultural and pluralistic parishes because an intimate relationship offers a fundamental theological perspective on how ministry deals with the differences of cultures. For ministry, the difference increases the possibilities to actualize cultural wholeness by interrelatedness and authenticity of culture. God's intimately relational presence in the parishes encourages us to confront the cross-cultural challenges of ministry and realize the opportunity to extend the greatness of cross-cultural harmony, pluralistic interconnectedness, and creative wholeness.

Creative transformation of process theology is one of the crucial elements which supports a cross-cultural ministry's possibility to grow and to envision cultural wholeness. As process theology views existence as a series of instances of becoming, existence is open to a constant possibility of change, and is constitutive of relationship with other existence. The openness to possibility is creative transformation which is the essence of life and growth. Creative transformation is to transform existence without

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<sup>12</sup> Whitehead, Process and Reality, 345.

suppressing or destroying it.<sup>13</sup> From a cross-cultural perspective, the transformation is to make each and every different culture creatively open to others without suppressing or destroying one's own cultural uniqueness and authenticity so that a multicultural society may become pluralistic, harmonious, and interdependent.

Creative transformation is involved in two different loves, responsive love and creative love. First, responsive love is a mutual and reciprocal love where one allows others to love and vice versa. And this mutual affection is always possible when one has a feeling to affect him/herself. When a culture respects others, it has to have a self-respect which is a ground for a reciprocal and interdependent respect. In this sense, responsive love for one's own cultural authenticity is a crucial springboard to enter into creative love.

Creative love looks beyond the realm of responsive love since it strives to initiate love in a broader context as opposed to being responsive in a limited relationship. The broader context of creative love includes the divine love in Christ.

The creative love of God produces creative transformation in creatures. One major direction of that transformation is toward the broadening of the anticipation of the future that is to be affected by one's actions. This broadening of horizons does not destroy interest in one's private future or in that of those with whom one is more immediately

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<sup>13</sup> Suchocki, 9-10.

concerned, but it sets these narrower concerns in a wider context within which they are transformed. The interest in the larger whole puts interest in more limited aspects of the future in a new light and gives them a new role. The person in whom creative love completes its work in this way is creatively transformed. Thus Christ is the giver of both responsive and creative human love.<sup>14</sup>

Creative transformation is a very vital issue for a cross-cultural ministry. In a multicultural context, creative transformation presents an example of not merely adding different cultures together, but transforming them to a richer and finer novelty of the ministry without losing one's own cultural authenticity. Thought from responsive and creative love can become a viable and applicable tool for the ministry to widen the horizon of intercultural and pluralistic faith and to transform the parishes into cultural wholeness with positive anticipation of the future.

One of the fundamental assumptions of process theology is everything is interrelational. The process of becoming of existence is based upon its relationship with others. Energy of all creativity from the one to the many, and the many to the one is constituted by relationship or interdependence with other beings.<sup>15</sup> The concept of interdependence from process thought implies a lot of effective possibilities for a cross-cultural ministry. For the ministry, the acknowledgement of the interdependence of different cultures in parishes is an

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<sup>14</sup> Cobb and Griffin, 100-01.

<sup>15</sup> Suchocki, 20.

essential foundation from which ministry launches its cross-cultural mission. Cultural absolutism or ethnocentrism can cause a sizable problem for the ministry, and neither one of those recognizes the necessity of interdependence as it maintains and uses imperialistic, independent, and egocentric attitudes against others. These negative attitudes have been shaped by the traditional dualism, and a cross-cultural ministry faces a critical mission to overcome cultural imperialism and egocentrism to make cultural wholeness by creative transformation possible in parishes.

Process theology presents some valuable theological tools for a cross-cultural ministry. The church is not a fixed institution but faithfully free for constant contextual changes. She should be responsibly fluid to the changes in her pastoral context. Especially in a rapidly changing society with a multicultural composition, ministry should be sensitive to a responsible interpretation of Christian faith in accordance with the needs of pluralistic parishes. Being sensitive to the context of parishes includes not only a recognition of the diversity of the parishes but a prophetic proclamation of the love and justice of the kingdom of God. The prophetic proclamation is a voice to transform the parishes with creative and responsive love which cares for them and offers a holistic vision of the interdependence of different cultures and authenticity of each individual culture.

### Theology of Han

Han(한) is one of the most native and indigenous concepts of Korea. It has occupied the Korean mind for thousands of years that it still has a strong influence on how Koreans think, value, and act. Kang Nam Oh defines Han as:

Han means 'great.' Religiously, it is personified in the form of Hanunim or Supreme Being. Philosophically, in short, it means a non-dualistic, non-substantial view of the world....Han is unique in that it is much more "nonorientable" than any other ontological perspective of the East. Han rejects the concept of substance not only as the constituents of the phenomenal world but also as the unchanging source of all things. There is no beginning and there is no ending. It is 'ultimately nonorientable through and through.'<sup>16</sup>

Han negates any theological or philosophical form of a fixed and unchangeable absolutism in the process of becoming of all of existence. Han does not support the negativism of the contemporary world, such as socio-cultural, econo-political, and ethnocentric imperialism or separatism which is caused by Cartesian and Newtonian dualism. Naturally Han highlights the importance of the holistic interdependence of the world.

The word Han is associated with the Sumerian word An, and the Mongolian word Gan. These words from different cultural and geographical backgrounds share the same concept of "sky," "high," and "totality." God, in Korean religious tradition, is Hanunim, and the name is based upon Han so that

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<sup>16</sup> Oh, 83-84.

Hanunim means "The Lord Sky" or "The Lord Oneness."<sup>17</sup> Han has several meanings but it has two major meanings, oneness and manyness. Oneness and manyness, here, were never used as separate meanings, since they were so interrelated that Han always meant One and at the same time, Many. In other words, "the same word One(Han) is both One and Many. One as One and One as Many are identical."<sup>18</sup> One as One has represented a transcendental aspect of God, while One as Many has implied phenomenal and concrete relationship between God and creation. The Korean God, Hanunim, based upon the concept of Han has never been understood as an entirely phenomenal or transcendental being but as a holistic and total deity who is interconnected to what is transcendental and what is immanent.<sup>19</sup>

As process theology negates Cartesian dualistic theism so does the theology of Han on the basis of a bipolar relationship between God and creation and the interdependence of all existence. The theology of Han also shares some similarities of theism with process panentheism or dipolar theism which means that God is transcendental and immanent to the world at the same time. This six thousand-year old theology of Korea is a critical tool for a cross-cultural

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<sup>17</sup> Sang Yil Kim, "What is Hanism?" in Hanism as Korean Mind, eds. Sang Yil Kim and Young Chan Ro (Los Angeles: Eastern Academy of Human Science, 1984), 13-14.

<sup>18</sup> Kim, "What is Hanism?" Hanism as Korean Mind, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Kim, "What is Hanism?" Hanism as Korean Mind, 15.

ministry as it negates dualism which justifies separation of God from the world and one culture from another. The theology of Han can motivate ministry to overcome the individualistic and independent Western world attitude based upon dualism.<sup>20</sup> In fact, a joint theological effort between process theology and the theology of Han can offer the world with multicultures and multiethnicity an effective methodology to overcome a narrow nationalism and ethnocentrism. A renewed interpretation of Christianity in accordance with the options from these two theologies can provide a cross-cultural ministry with a vision of cultural and theological wholeness to a world of brokenness and separation.

Therefore, the task of theologies in light of interdependence of different cultures and ethnic groups is to help people of the world build the self-identity of being interrelated and interconnected to each other. Along with process theology, Han recognizes the importance of cultural pluralism in the spirit of interdependence and of cultural pluralism in light of cultural transformation to wholeness.

According to what has been said, Han as oneness with many and many-ness with one has three major contributions to a cross-cultural ministry. One is its holistic worldview. This view is based upon awareness of the essential interrelatedness of all existence. According to the holistic worldview of Han, no culture is completely independent from other cultures

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<sup>20</sup> Kim, "What is Hanism?" Hanism as Korean Mind, 15.

because of the essential interrelatedness of all existence.<sup>21</sup> In fact, the validity of one culture depends upon its relationship with others. The civilization of the world testifies that reciprocal influence between cultures constitutes the existence of history. Han with its organic worldview suggests that survival of the civilization will be in a great danger if the different cultures and ethnic groups of the world ignore the importance of holistic interdependence of all existence.

Holistic interdependence is not only important for matters of culture and ethnicity, but also for the whole issue of the environment and the survival of Earth. The civilization of humankind now has to faithfully apply the principle of organic interdependence to how humanity deals with nature, which is not merely a human issue but a fundamental framework of human survival. Han suggests oneness of cultures with their environments that the people from all the different cultures will have to value the truth of organic interdependence with nature.

The second contribution from Han is not totally unrelated to the previous point, namely a pluralistic attitude toward all different cultures. Being one, and many, as well, is to recognize the differences that other cultures have, and to encourage the people to free themselves from all rigid and stubborn dogmatism, prejudice, and preconception, and from

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<sup>21</sup> Oh, 83.



the bondage of localism, provincialism, artificial restrictions, sentimental bias, and intolerant self-centeredness.<sup>22</sup> Han produces a cross-cultural ministry which enables one culture to interact with another in light of liberating people from cultural prejudice and bias that they might be able to appreciate and respect the differences they share. It enables people to be aware that one culture is a part of many as opposed to being a center of all. Cultural centrism and ethnocentrism are detrimental to a cross-cultural ministry because they prevent a culture from being interdependent with others; hence a culture can be either isolated from or imperialistic over others. A narrow nationalism and racial bias are caused by provincialism and localism to which history has vividly testified how harmful they can be to the whole of humanity.

A final contribution of Han to a cross-cultural ministry is its effort to transform han(恨), a feeling of resentment and oppression to Han(한), interrelational love. The Korean people are a han-ridden people because of a long history of unjust oppression by their rulers and foreign invaders. The dictatorship of the tyrannies throughout her history has amplified the people's han, and numerous invasions of the neighboring countries have created an enormous amount of han. The recent Japanese occupation for thirty-six years, the Korean war, and the military dictatorship have produced acute

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<sup>22</sup> Oh, 85.

han for the oppressed in Korea. In spite of the modernization of Korea with its splendid economic success, the majority of workers feel they are economically oppressed by an unfair distribution of profit, and it, too, is responsible for the accumulation of han.

Therefore, han(恨) of the Korean people is more a socio-economic and political product as opposed to a theological one. It is obvious that han should be resolved by reforming the country with economic and socio-political justice. A theological voice in Korea to liberate the han-ridden people, such as Minjung theology, must be heard and realized justly to resolve the han of the people. The recovery of justice might be the foremost important agenda for the country, but equally important is that of Han(한). The Korean people should be able to look beyond the han of resentment and anger. Especially for Korean Christians, they need to see the possibility of resolving han(恨) into Han(한). A theology of Han can be a creative transformation to bring justice and peace for the han-ridden people that the history of Korea might be free from the revolving revenge of han.<sup>23</sup> A theology of Han, as a creative transformation and harmony of one and many, never has to justify injustice or overlook the pain of Minjung, the oppressed, but it must also be able to offer the people a vision of wholeness. The prophetic voice of Han

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<sup>23</sup> Sang Yil Kim, "Han and han: Theological Interpretation of Hanism," in Hanism as Korean Mind, 109.

should be addressed to those who oppress Minjung, and at the same time, it should warn of the danger of the cyclical resentment and revenge towards all.

Han resolving han may sound too romantic, but it is an available option for Christians to exercise justice with a sense of holistic and interdependent love. To look beyond revenge against the oppressors, who are also oppressed by their egoism and self-centered econo-political manipulation and exploitation against the oppressed, is a very holistic and Christian option. An important lesson from Jesus is to love others not necessarily because they love us, but because they, too, are sinners for whom he died. For a cross-cultural ministry which has to deal with people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, the creative transformation of Han is a very crucial methodology to achieve wholeness with justice and reconciliation.

In a multicultural context, oppression by cultural absolutism and ethnocentrism is the outcome of intercultural injustice and a lack of interdependent wholeness. A theology of Han challenges such a context to recover intercultural justice and a vision for wholeness with cultural interdependence and authenticity. The concept of "One with many and many with one" implies an important theological methodology for the survival and growth of multicultural society. It is a dipolar recognition: recognition of the uniqueness of the different cultures, and also of the

necessity to transform each other creatively and positively to invite a uniting wholeness for the future. A cross-cultural ministry should be able to learn from Han, and apply the lesson to maximize what Han, a creative transformation from Korea, can do to envision holistic interculturalization.

### Autochthonous Theology

Hispanic American theology emerges out of its own journey to seek cultural justice and liberation. As a non-white group in America, they, too, are victims of a socio-political, economic, and cultural marginalization of the society. Like many Latin American immigrants from Central and South America, the immigrants from Mexico have a large population in America, especially in Southern California. Their experience in encountering the mainstream culture has an inability to affirm their cultural integrity and dignity because of socio-political and economic oppression which is caused by racism, classism, and cultural discrimination.

One of the cultural traits of the Mexican immigrants was a sense of fatalism—an acceptance of life as it is without a sense of mastery of personal destiny. This outlook was similar to the stoicism of Orientals, but without the optimism and conviction that an individual can effect change. This fatalism goes back into the Mexican religious past and clashes rather dramatically with the Anglo emphasis on conquering and subordinating nature through technology.<sup>24</sup>

Hispanic Americans in general are the victims of econo-

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<sup>24</sup> Claerbaut, 149.

cultural stereotyping, such as being labeled as "wetback" or "low riders," and racial discrimination which is reflected in socio-economic and political structures. Cultural interdependence and wholeness for them seem too far from reality as they experience the various types of oppressions and discriminations. There has been some effort to overcome this difficulty. One effort is an assimilation approach. It is a cultural purification process which encourages the immigrants to be Americanized, to be, more accurately, Anglo-Saxonized. They are forced to give up their language, cultural authenticity, and lifestyle that they may be culturally purified to be American. The melting pot theory is one of the examples of this approach but, in reality, it has proven to be wrong in many ways recently.

Those earlier immigrants were made to feel that the price of acceptance into the American way of life was the severance of ties with their cultural past. The struggles of these immigrants paid off for them, and they maintain that it will pay off for Hispanics as well if they pay the same price and "melt into the pot." The advocates and practitioners of this approach do not realize, however, that for Hispanics the situation is very different from that of these other groups, because of historical, geographical, and cultural realities that cannot be ignored.<sup>25</sup>

Another effort, to overcome discrimination by racism and socio-political and cultural oppression, was made to separate themselves from the rest of the culture. They strive to keep their cultural integrity and dignity by segregating themselves

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<sup>25</sup> Marina Herrera, "Hispanics: How Can the Church Respond to Their Presence?" in Pace 12 (Winona, Minn.: Saint Mary's Press, 1982), 1.

from the dominant culture. Especially Hispanic churches began to import priests and religious leaders to maintain their uniqueness back in their homeland. These separatists strongly felt that the only way of continuing their cultural and religious exercise was to widen the gap between their cultural and religious norms, values, and practices and those of the dominant culture. In the process of widening the gap, they did not feel the necessity of cultural adjustment in order to be interdependent with other cultures.<sup>26</sup>

This position is extremely opposite to the assimilation approach. It is rather a reaction of betrayal and disappointment against what the assimilation approach has done to their immigrant life. The identity crisis, they felt in interacting with the oppressive and dominant culture, has encouraged them to become who and what they are, completely separate from any kind of cultural and religious interference. Yet, in the reality of multicultural society to which they now belong, it is practically impossible to isolate them completely no matter how hard they try. The assimilation approach ignores the uniqueness and authenticity of the immigrant culture, while separation is not realistically possible. Therefore, both, keeping their identity and interacting with others in a spirit of interdependence and harmony, have to be sought out and achieved in a multicultural and pluralistic society.

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<sup>26</sup> Herrera, 2.

As the expectations of assimilation and separation lost their steam, Hispanic theologians began to explore Hispanic self-identity in a multicultural context to set a foundation for interdependent cultural participation. Their theology encourages the Hispanic community to maintain what is unique and authentic to them, and yet, Hispanic theology promotes a voluntary cultural interaction with others to achieve pluralistic wholeness.<sup>27</sup> Autochthonous theology is one of the examples of this effort. Autochthonous stands for a concept of interdependent self-identity. Autochthonous has a dual meaning which validates the necessity of self-identity and, at the same time, promotes interaction with others. For interdependent interaction between different cultures and theologies, autochthonous theology recognizes the limit of the traditional Western theology which has been developed by hierarchical dualism. Because of the dualistic theological approach of traditional Western theology, autochthonous theology acknowledges the theological difficulty that traditional theology faces in a pluralistic context. Traditional Western theology, according to an autochthonous theology's point of view, has caused hierarchical racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, and imperialism.<sup>28</sup>

Keeping self-identity as Hispanics in American society

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<sup>27</sup> John P. Rossing, "Mestizaje and Marginality: A Hispanic American Theology," Theology Today 45 (Oct. 1988): 294-95.

<sup>28</sup> Lopez.

is difficult because of theological unilateralism and homogeneity which tend to omit a heterogeneity of context. Autochthonous theology approves the necessity of a Third World theology of liberation from its dualistic oppression, in order to maintain what is unique and authentic, and for its own theological and cultural integrity. In doing so, autochthonous theology negates impositional theology which tries to ignore the marginal cultural and theological presence in a multicultural context.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the theology urges each and every culture to strive for recovering their genuine self-identity. This recovery can be achieved theologically when Anglo-Saxon Christianity or Christianity, according to the "American way of life," is reviewed and reexamined according to the gospel of Jesus Christ from the perspective of one's own cultural interpretation.<sup>30</sup>

Interdependent interaction between cultures is strongly recommended by autochthonous theology. Homogestalt is one of the key words of autochthonous theology. Homogestalt means "a voluntary interaction without losing self-authenticity."<sup>31</sup> Homogestalt denies the validity of assimilation and separation as it envisions and promotes a cultural wholeness with cultural authenticity and interdependence. In a multicultural

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<sup>29</sup> Lopez.

<sup>30</sup> Orlando E. Costas, Christ Outside the Gate (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1982), 80.

<sup>31</sup> Lopez.



context, every culture has to maintain its authenticity rather than work toward an impositional unilateralism or ethnocentrism because either unilateralism or ethnocentrism has cost American society destructive racial discrimination, classism, econo-political exploitation against the minorities, and sexism. Autochthonous theology views that one's cultural authenticity is valid when it, without impositional domination, recognizes that of others. As Boff mentioned, a society has to adopt "Transcendental Anthropology" which means all human beings should be open to one another with a sense of equal value of true human transcendence. This is to say that Imago Dei shared equally by all human beings has to be a fundamental basis for all cultures struggling for an open, non-impositional, non-dualistic, and antiauthoritarian society.<sup>32</sup>

Autochthonous theology is a realistic option not only for Hispanic Americans but for all people who share their challenges of interculturation in a multicultural and pluralistic society. Autochthonous theology appears to be a viable response to the cry of Hispanic Americans whose intercultural experience in the society of a dominant culture make them look for maintaining self-identity and their cultural authenticity in interaction with others. Autochthonous theology empowers the integrity of the

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<sup>32</sup> Leonardo Boff, Church: Charism and Power, trans. John W. Diercksmeier (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 17-18.

marginalized and oppressed to be confident in and affirmative of who they are; and yet, the confidence and affirmation are not valid unless they are willing to open themselves to holistic and interdependent interaction with other cultures.

## CHAPTER 4

## A Cross-cultural Ministry

Theoria and Praxis

To study the interdynamics between culture and Christianity is to understand the theoria of what is happening in a cross-cultural ministry. Chapters 2 and 3 cover what praxis the ministry must comprehend to maximize its efficiency in a pluralistic society. From the perspective of social science, the nature and role of culture has to be investigated and researched so that the practice of a cross-cultural ministry has a clear vision for full ministerial engagement with what is surrounding the ministry. The investigation and research in theoria provides the ministry with a comprehensive vision so that the ministry might be sensitive to and fruitful in the life of the church with a multicultural context.<sup>1</sup> Research on culture, as part of social science, provides cross-cultural ministry with constraints and channels our actions toward what the ministry must have for appropriate strategies and skills for a holistic interculturalization.<sup>2</sup>

Theological reflection on a cross-cultural ministry is an attempt to understand how Christian interpretation of the dynamics of multicultural pluralism is communicated and how the ministry can formulate a self-conscious theology to

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<sup>1</sup>John Deschner, "What Does Practical Theology Study?" Perkins Journal 35, no. 3 (1982): 8.

<sup>2</sup>Don Browning, introduction to Practical Theology, ed. Don Browning (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 11.

minister to the need of the people of a pluralistic society.<sup>3</sup> Theological reflection on the ministry should be theologically sensitive and responsive to what is happening in the context of ministry. Theological reflection is "identifying the situation [of the ministry] and describing its distinctive and constituent features."<sup>4</sup> After the process of identification and description of the situation of ministry, theological reflection is to provide a praxis of ministry with the theological hermeneutics that ministry may capture its vision, meaning, and call.<sup>5</sup>

Theological research on process theology, Autochthonous theology, and the theology of Han is to identify theologically where the vitality of ministry is now and what kind of theological discernment should take place in the context of multicultural society. The theological hermeneutics of these theologies is crucial for a cross-cultural ministry as the parishes of the ministry become more racially and culturally complex. Theological hermeneutics in such a setting may be one of the fundamental requirements for formulating a contextually responsible and faithfully envisioning call to a cross-cultural ministry.

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<sup>3</sup>Browning, introduction to Practical Theology, 13-14.

<sup>4</sup>Edward Farley, "Interpreting Situations: An Inquiry into the Nature of Practical Theology," in Formation and Reflection, eds. Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 12.

<sup>5</sup>Farley, 14.

A cross-cultural ministry must be based upon a "mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation."<sup>6</sup> Practice of a cross-cultural ministry is interwoven with how the ministry is interpreted and reflected theologically. Self-critical and self-reflective ministry makes a fruitful and contextual praxis of the redemptive work of God possible.

### Exploring the Context of Cross-cultural Ministry

Today's society in general is more radically exposed than ever to the diversity of cultures, languages, and ethnic groups. A completely monocultural society is not possible any more. Influx of immigrants from all over the world and a growing number of non English-speaking ethnic minorities are some of the most visible socio-cultural phenomena of today's society. The Los Angeles area, especially, comprises one of the most (if not the most) diversified societies in the world. The city's composition of ethnic groups and the number of languages spoken there are phenomenal. Probably no place in human history has experienced more intensity of diversity in terms of culture, language, and ethnicity than this city has.

The presence of African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, white Americans, and Asian-Americans brings the diversity, and this diversity, needless

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<sup>6</sup>David Tracy, "The Foundations of Practical Theology," in Practical Theology, ed. Don Browning (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 76.

to say, becomes the context of a cross-cultural ministry. The rapid change of the context even causes fear because the rate of change is often a lot faster than that of people's understanding of and adjustment to the change.

For the ministry, this change, brings not only fear but an opportunity to learn interdependently and to grow mutually amongst different people from different cultures. In this sense, fear and even culture shock are the sign of opportunity and growth rather than of problems.

Often we cannot cope with change and go into what is called culture shock. At this point we cannot function in our situation very well and don't understand what is going on, just as if we were suddenly in a new culture and language in another part of the world. In moments of culture shock we are not able to change at all because our way of understanding ourselves and the world no longer makes sense and we don't know what to do. Certainly we experience such moments as unpleasant, risky, and threatening. Yet we ourselves can grow and develop in our faith and understanding of the world if we are patient and try to live through the moment of crisis and learn from it.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, a cross-cultural ministry should be able to embrace the risk of change as it ministers to people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The growth and development of a cross-cultural ministry depend on how the ministry can embrace the differences and transform them into wholeness in Christ. For a cross-cultural ministry, the diversity should be viewed as a God-given opportunity to witness the love and justice of Christianity, which recognizes the uniqueness and

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<sup>7</sup>Russell, introduction to Changing Contexts of Our Faith, 17.

authenticity of each culture and presents a viable option to grow interdependently and holistically. The rapid changes of the pastoral context challenge ministry to widen the horizon of life experience and deepen our faith in Christ.

Changes urge a cross-cultural ministry and people in general to experience firsthand exposure to cultures other than one's own. Because of the presence and interaction of different cultures, one might have an opportunity to understand others in their own cultural authenticity, and his/her own understanding can transform his/her cultural uniqueness to a cultural wholeness. This transformation in the diversity challenges our socio-cultural perspective as Brown argues.

The sheer human responsibility of understanding another's position is a prerequisite here, but the other part of the task is even more important, namely, allowing our own perspective to be opened up, challenged, and transformed by immediate contact with the perspective of the other. This is not a comfortable position to espouse, and I say it as a white male, one of those who has the most to lose, initially at least, by such an acknowledgement. For a long, long time, theology was a white male preserve. We were dominant. And we thought that "dominant" equaled "normative."<sup>8</sup>

Americanization as an attempt to assimilate ethnic cultures to the Anglo-American culture is based upon the assumption that what is done by the majority should be the norm for everyone. The melting pot theory has been discussed

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<sup>8</sup>Robert MacAfee Brown, "What is Contextual Theology?" in Changing Contexts of our Faith, ed. Letty M. Russell (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 92.

by a number of sociologists recently, and the theory basically argues that every different culture and ethnicity will come together and melt into one culture, the culture of the majority. However, the melting pot as a form of cultural assimilation into the major culture remains as a theory and is not the reality of the multicultural and multiethnic society.

A salad bowl theory is replacing the former since the latter allows the different cultures to retain their cultural uniqueness and authenticity. Different ingredients to make a salad may be mixed with each other, and yet, each of them maintains what is authentic to its nature. Even though different cultures and ethnic groups live together in the same bowl, it is obvious that they are not melted into one nature. More than ever there are many cultural groups who strive to rediscover their cultural and ethnic identities, and this happens even among whites who share different identities from their ancestries.<sup>9</sup>

A cross-cultural ministry demonstrates the necessity of an interdependent and pluralistic interpretation of Christian faith. Cultural and ethnic distinctiveness is an enriching environment for the ministry rather than one more problem for the majority and the way they think it should be. The multicultural context, therefore, lures a cross-cultural

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<sup>9</sup>United Methodist Church, Board of Discipleship, Ethnic Minorities in the United Methodist Church (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1976), 1-2.



ministry into being more affirmative and even aggressive to tackle this opportunity for growth, maturity, and wholeness. The task of the ministry is too vital and meaningful to all people to be imprisoned by one dominant culture. In fact, the ministry was never meant to be boxed in by cultural absolutism, but rather to demonstrate interdependent and holistic transformation throughout history. The way in which God interacts with humanity is too abundant to be monopolized by one dominant ethnicity.

### Cross-cultural Ministry at

#### Sherman Oaks United Methodist Church

An analysis of and a reflection upon a cross-cultural ministry at Sherman Oaks United Methodist church in this project will be focused upon how a pastor from one cultural background interacts with his congregation from another culture. In the process of interculturalization, some of the fundamental cultural differences are found, and the differences are crucial elements to be analyzed and understood for the betterment of the ministry. Of many differences, the differences of how the cultures view individualism and communalism, pursuit of happiness and transformation of han (悃), and vertical and horizontal relationships are selected and discussed as they seem to be most visible in the ministry. A cross-cultural interaction takes places in the various practical aspects of congregational life, such as

administration, worship, preaching, and pastoral care, and the interaction poses some notable points in cross-cultural ministry and is also analyzed and discussed.

The United Methodist Church probably is one of the most multicultural and multiethnic denominations in the world. Its commitment to inclusiveness of ministry is one of its well-known strengths, and the pluralistic aggressiveness of the denomination's policy is a proper response to the need for multicultural and multiethnic parishes. Even though the church still suffers from racism, paternalism, condescension, prejudice, and bias against ethnic minorities, there have been considerable efforts to improve the situation. The presence of ethnic minority churches in the denomination is appreciated in many ways, and their visibility and leadership in many different areas are vital and active. Especially the California-Pacific Annual Conference, which covers Southern California, Hawaii, and Guam, has a lot of ethnic minority groups, and their role in the Conference is significant.

Out of the spirit of pluralism and cultural interdependence, the Sherman Oaks United Methodist Church became one of the first white congregations whose minister is a first generation Korean immigrant pastor who was appointed by the bishop of the California-Pacific Annual Conference in July of 1989. The church is located in Sherman Oaks, a relatively affluent area near the city of Los Angeles. The church has not been ministered to by any other than a white

male clergy for half a century. Of 284 members, ninety percent of them are white, and the rest African-Americans and Asians. About forty percent of the congregation is forty years old or younger, another forty percent, sixty years old or older, and twenty percent in between. The church is going through a vitality of interculturalization between her pastor and the congregation. The journey of interculturalization has been learning, understanding, growing, and envisioning a culturally holistic experience.

The cross-cultural ministry in Sherman Oaks comprises cross-cultural impact, mutual education, and readjustment between a Korean cultural interpretation of Christianity and that of the white middle-class. Cultural norms, value systems, communications, and customs are mutually reviewed, negotiated, and readjusted to be more viable to this forefront ministry of interculturalization. Ten years of the Korean-American minister's training in the various American institutions and pastoral experience are helpful to serve the church, but fall short for complete understanding of the culture.

Culture shocks and cross-cultural impacts have been a part of the challenge of the ministry, yet they have been the major ministerial elements which provide the minister and the congregation with an opportunity for cultural wholeness and confidence in unity with God. In fact, culture shocks and cross-cultural impacts motivate the ministry to learn,

communicate, and widen faith and its interpretations according to the norms and values of the different cultures. According to Urban Holms, a cross-cultural ministry, such as the one in Sherman Oaks, can produce decisive action out of meaning. The action is to carry out the mission assigned by Christ, and the meaning is a holistic approach to the truth of Christianity, traveling beyond the cultural and ethnic boundary.<sup>10</sup> The ministry is a testimonial action to witness the importance of cultural wholeness of Christian truth, looking beyond a ministry bound by cultural and ethnic differences.

The testimonial cross-cultural ministry was made possible for three reasons. One of them is institutional. The Methodist tradition has been a commonly shared item by both the minister and the congregation. The minister is deeply rooted in the Methodist tradition, born in a Methodist minister's parsonage in Korea and nurtured by Methodist education, and most of the congregation are faithfully claiming that they are offspring of John Wesley. The tradition-bound observance is highly appreciated, and the loyalty to the institution is rarely questioned.

A second is a willingness to communicate. Intelligence and rationalism are always at work when cultural differences become stumbling blocks for a clear understanding. As a matter of fact, intelligence and rationalism act as a very important cushion for a cross-cultural impact. The impact has

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<sup>10</sup> Holms, 41-43.

been absorbed, sorted out, and studied to extend a space for more efficient cross-cultural understanding.

Finally the mystical or the presence of the Holy Spirit has been a vital factor which enabled the minister and congregation to be interdependent and united by one ministry. It is important to note that cross-cultural shock or impact has been absorbed and healed by the loyalty to the institution, Methodism, and by the mutual communication with a cross-cultural respect, and equally important is the role of the Holy Spirit which mystically binds the difference in a harmonious and understanding way.<sup>11</sup>

### Cross-cultural Impact between the Cultures

#### Individualism and Communalism

Out of two years of the ministry, there are several observations which might describe some of the cultural differences. One observation is that while the white middle class church-goers are individualistic in general, the minister comes from a culture of communal relationship. Individualism is one of the most distinctive Americanisms, and this is widely accepted by the most Americans.

Individualism lies at the very core of American culture.... We believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness, of the individual. Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, judge for our selves, make our own decisions, live our lives

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<sup>11</sup> Connolly C. Gamble, Jr., "A Life Long Process of Learning," in Creating an Intentional Ministry, ed. John Biersdorf (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 111.

as we see it fit, is not only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious. We are closely linked to our individualism.<sup>12</sup>

The individual independence of the congregation is one of the highly visible cultural phenomena from the Korean cultural perspective. Privacy can be an exchangeable word for individualism as privacy clearly secures a space for individuality. The white middle-class congregation claims that it belongs to the church as a faith community, but the individualistic identity in ministry is very much visible and vocal.

Their commitment, sacrifice, and loyalty to the church make the ministry possible, but the commitment, sacrifice, and loyalty seem to come either after the security of privacy of individuality or with a clear recognition of the importance of the value of individualism. What an individual thinks, values, and judges seems to be clearly expressed in the ministry in Sherman Oaks, and individualism of the congregation rarely yields to the interest of the community if it violates the space and time of individuality. Individual space and time determine the size of the room for interaction with others in a communal setting, and this determination stands very firm when it is challenged by the need of the community. Their personal relationship scarcely violates the requirement of individuality so that the

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<sup>12</sup> Robert N. Bellah et al., Habits of the Heart (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 142.

intensity of communal bond often is lower than the expectation of the minister from the culture of community.

The high visibility of individualism does not seem to be a unique cultural phenomenon of Sherman Oaks United Methodist Church. Often in an organized religious group such as the church, the strong role of individualism is visible from the perspective of Korean culture. Working together as a community of faith was probably one of the most powerful cultural and theological values in the experience of the faith community to which the minister belonged in Korea. The space and time of each individual member of the community was often reduced and sacrificed for a communal ministry. The commitment of the church members to the work of their ministry was often so strong that individualism was expected to yield to what was demanded by the community. The numerical growth of the Korean churches does not seem to be accidental but is an outcome of many different factors. The strong sense of commitment to the communal activity of the church is certainly one of the factors.

From the Korean cultural and ministerial perspective, the individualism of white middle-class American culture in general seems to pose a problem for ministry which often requires a commitment from individuals to community activity. It might not be fair to generalize that white middle-class American culture does not uplift the importance and value of community, but in comparison to the Korean understanding of

the importance and value of community, white middle-class American culture has less of an emphasis on communalism as opposed to individualism. The different understandings of community and individuals in Sherman Oaks United Methodist Church become a constant reminder for the minister and congregation to be self-reflective, self-critical, and mutually adjusting for a holistic cross-cultural ministry.

How differently the minister of the church views the culture of his congregation is also based upon the Korean concept of family. Korean culture is deeply rooted in family. First of all, the value and tradition of an extended family is a very important part of the lifestyle of Korean people. Who and how I am are a product of the community, especially that of a family. The family where multi-generations live together has been a fundamental foundation of who I am, and what I do now is constantly related to the community of the extended family. Individualism often is challenged by communalism, and individualism often has to yield. Privacy in Korean culture is frequently subject or secondary to the norm, value, and expectation of community.

American individualism becomes even more visible from the different cultural and philosophical perspectives of Korea. And this perspective formulates mainly a perception of how the Korean-American minister views the values, norms, beliefs, and life-style of his congregation at Sherman Oaks. One of the leading philosophies of Korean minds is



Confucianism. Confucianism has been with the Korean people for hundreds of years, and the role of Confucianism in the socio-cultural and relational dynamics of the people is still influential and dominant. The influx of Western culture to the society of Korea is something that cannot be overlooked, and yet Confucianism plays a key role in how Korean people think, value, and act. Therefore, it is safe to say that Korea is largely a Confucian society, and the society, according to Confucian philosophy, is primarily based on a family system.

The family system in the society is made out of the concept of an extended family and not out of that of a nuclear. The presence of multi-generations in a family unit naturally highlights the importance of the community concept as opposed to individualism. A disciplinary family order with respect for elders, which secures harmony between family members, is a backbone of maintaining the society of the family system based upon Confucianism. In this case, society is basically an extension of family, and Korea is a magnified family in Confucianism. The magnification of the family system is responsible for an extreme homogeneity of the society. The family system or family-ism in Confucian tradition constitutes what an individual develops as his/her norm in the culture.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Pong Bae Park, The Encounter of Christianity with Traditional Culture and Ethics in Korea: An Essay in Christian Self-Understanding, Ph.D. Diss., Vanderbilt University, 1970.

Value and norm of community based upon the concept of family, therefore, are largely visible and active in social issues of Korean society. As the society is viewed as a magnified family unit, the social issues in Korea are acted out by a strong sense of community, a magnified extended family. One of the examples of this socio-cultural phenomenon is found in the way Minjung theology articulates social justice for the oppressed, han-ridden people. In Minjung theology, a Korean theology for the oppressed, the concept of koinonia is a dominant thrust for the movement of social justice so that individualism is scarcely visible. A socio-political history of Minjung concentrates on what the community can do to liberate the oppressed, and the naturally individualistic attitude often loses its foundation.<sup>14</sup>

The cultural emphasis on communal value as opposed to the individual has formed the ministerial perspective of the Korean-American minister at Sherman Oaks. How he understands the ministry, how he expects what the congregation can sacrifice for the ministry, and how he perceives the socio-cultural operation of the interdynamics between communalism and individualism are constantly in the process of new understanding, interpretation, and adjustment to make a cross-cultural ministry possible and successful. The cross-cultural

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Ann Arbor: UMI, 1989, 104-05.

<sup>14</sup> David Kwang-sun Suh, "Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation," in Minjung Theology, ed. Commission on Theological Concerns, Christian Conference of Asia, 15-17.

encounter between the two different cultures in the Sherman Oaks United Methodist Church has reflected a different understanding of community between the minister and congregation. The concept of community is shared by both parties, but the intensity or degree of expectation of being in communion with one another seems to be quite different. A cross-cultural impact that is shared by the different cultures, therefore, has to do with the encounter between Korean community-oriented culture and the white middle-class individualistic culture. The role and understanding of individualism in the ministry are different from one another, and this difference has to be adjusted constantly according to faithful interpretation of Christianity in a cross-cultural ministry.

The content of truth in Christianity which is given to both cultures is the same, but the interpretations from the cultures are somewhat different because of the differences in cultures. But it has been very clear from a cross-cultural ministerial perspective that the Korean cultural emphasis on community has a danger of overlooking the importance of individuals in the congregation, and, on the other hand, that white middle-class American individualism can decrease what the church can do as a community of faith. The more the church experiences cross-cultural growth in the ministry, the stronger they feel about the need for an interdependent understanding of cultural differences and a faithful

adjustment toward a holistic balance between the cultures.

In the context of cross-cultural ministry at Sherman Oaks, a minister from the Korean cultural experience encounters the new and radically different culture of white middle-class Americanism, and by the same token, the congregation now faces the different emphasis on community, based upon a Korean cultural background from their ministerial leadership. The difference might pose a problem of intercultural communication between the Korean-American minister and the congregation. An extra effort might be needed for a ministry in other than the usual setting. But the presence of the differences of the cultures and how they interpret faith can be viewed as an exciting opportunity to widen the horizon of ministry and to grow with a cross-cultural perspective. Because of the opportunity of ministry, there should be a renewed sense of vision which envisions a viable and balanced relationship between an individual and the body of the faith community. The cross-cultural interaction in this ministry can introduce a productive and persuasive balance between the importance of the individual and the community. The introduction of a productive and persuasive balance cannot be done if cross-cultural ministry tries to impose one cultural value over against another as opposed to refreshing the call to the community of faith which is made up of individuals.

### Pursuit of Happiness and Transformation of Han(한)

Generally speaking, pursuit of happiness is deeply placed in the minds of most white middle-class Americans. The pursuit of happiness happens to be even more visible from a Korean American perspective which is undergirded by the history of suffering and oppression. From this point of view, one of the influential philosophies of life for white middle-class Americans seems to encourage them to work to achieve or earn more so that they might have a better life. Cultural values and norms are centered around the theme of earning more, living better, being more successful, and being happier. White middle-class American cultural priority often puts the pursuit of happiness on top, and anything that hinders that goal seems to be problematic. Social and ethical justification for pursuing a happier life frequently constitutes a framework for the purpose of life.<sup>15</sup> Society in general for white middle-class Americans, therefore, becomes a place for competition for success, fame, and better life. The competition for better life often produces a terrible isolation of individuals, and the sense of togetherness seems to lose its place in the society.

Having a better life often is perceived as having more. Material possession becomes the most visible sign of being successful in pursuing a happy life, and the amount of freedom is frequently sized by how much an individual possesses. This

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<sup>15</sup> Bellah et al., 3-6.

freedom, according to the amount of material possession, introduces the individual capacity of doing what the individual wants to do with his/her possessions, and again, the capacity for freedom seems to be a ground for the materialistic individualism of the culture. When pursuing happiness is perceived as an accumulation of materials, ethical and socio-economic values are confused frequently, and the priority of life often overlooks the importance of the morality and the value of community.

Pursuing happiness seems to have a great influence on the minds of white middle-class Christians. Public church from their perspective seems to be viewed as a place of worship to praise God for providing them with material convenience and happier lifestyle. Religion, therefore, takes part in a role to improve what is good to better, and this process isolates such a belief from the core of the gospel message which claims liberation for the oppressed and sinners. Pursuing the happiness in the culture must be redefined from the materialistic and individualistic to the spiritual and communal perspective. Christian values cannot be imprisoned by a culture, but they should be liberated from the cultural absolutism because

the Christian dynamic is the venturesomeness of participating with God in the transformation of contemporary cultural forms to serve more adequately as vehicles for God's interaction with human beings. What we seek is a Christianity equivalent in its dynamics to that displayed in the pages of the New Testament. But we often fear to let loose from the old familiar forms. We may recognize the need for

a new dynamic but our cultural conditioning often mitigates against our engaging in the kind of experimentation that might lead us to discover it.<sup>16</sup>

Interaction with other cultures in a cross-cultural ministry has an advantage to find a different cultural option to discover or recover a Christian dynamic which might rekindle the spirit of the gospels of Jesus Christ. The religion of pursuing better from good in a culture of pursuing happiness now has an opportunity to interact with the Korean cultural interpretation of Christianity through the intercultural ministry in Sherman Oaks.

For the Korean American pastor's point of view, resolving han (恨) into a han-free life is a major content of the interpretation of Christian faith. Resolving han into a han-free life is different from pursuit of happiness since while the former emphasizes redemption from what is oppressive, the latter underlines God's blessing for a better life than good. The transformation of han in the context of Sherman Oaks is deeply rooted in how the pastor interprets his ministry with the white middle-class American congregation. Han here is a feeling of being oppressed unjustly and of being resigned against self-will due to injustice. Removing han and turning it to more a positive result continues to be present in how the pastor perceives the ministry cross-culturally.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the presence of han in Korean

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<sup>16</sup> Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 382.

culture as a feeling of being oppressed and of being resigned against self-will due to injustice<sup>17</sup> is deeply rooted in their history of oppression. In more than five thousand years of the nation's history, Korea has been invaded by the neighboring countries frequently, and the result of wars has left a deep scar in their hearts. A long standing tradition of socio-economic classism is another factor for producing han. The ruling class has been manipulating, exploiting, and oppressing Minjung, the oppressed majority, throughout the history so that Minjung has accumulated han for centuries. Recently, a series of military revolutions and dictatorships continue the accumulation of han by the Minjung. Even though Korea now experiences an astounding economic success, Minjung's han continues to exist due to unjust distribution of profit and socio-political exploitation against the powerless.

Christianity for Minjung and their theology, which is a leading theology to represent the people, is neither a civic religion to improve what is good to better, nor a religious guideline for pursuit of happiness. But it is an empowering faith for the oppressed to transform their han into justice and liberation. Several Minjung theologians in Seoul, Korea express how they perceive the core of Christianity in the spirit of justice and liberation for the oppressed.

Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, lived and dwelt among

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<sup>17</sup> Nam Dong Suh, 58.



the oppressed, poverty-stricken, and sick in Judea. He boldly confronted Pontius Pilate, a representative of the Roman Empire, and he was crucified while witnessing the truth. He has risen from the dead, releasing the power to transform and set the people free. We resolve that we will follow the footsteps of our Lord, living among our oppressed and poor people, standing against political oppression, and participating in the transformation of history,<sup>18</sup> for this is the only way to the Messianic Kingdom.

Naturally, the focus of Minjung theology is on the transformation of the unjust suffering of the people of han into a han-free life, not on the improvement of good to better. From the perspective of Minjung theology, Jesus was with Minjung, of Minjung, and for Minjung. He was a focal point of the theology and history of Minjung which constantly seek to resolve the han of the oppressed.

In accordance with the interpretation of Minjung theology, it is very clear that Minjung was ochlos in Mark's gospel. Ochlos in the gospel were "the sinners, the tax collectors, the sick, those who opposed the powers in Jerusalem, the despised people of Galilee, prostitutes, the underdogs of Judaism and the lost sheep of Israel."<sup>19</sup> Jesus himself was identified with ochlos, and that was the reason why he was crucified unjustly. Transformation of han is to liberate sinners not the righteous, to recover the dignity of

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<sup>18</sup> David Kwang-sun Suh, Theology, Ideology, and Culture (Hong Kong: World Student Christian Federation, Asia/Pacific Region, 1983), 12.

<sup>19</sup> David Kwang-sun Suh, Theology, Ideology, and Culture, 54.

the oppressed not the oppressors, and to proclaim the Good News to all not the privileged only. The transformation is not an action to pursue happiness but to redefine the truth of the gospels according to the life and ministry of Jesus, Ochlos. The transformation strives not for a more convenient, comfortable, or happier life but for a liberating faith for the ochlos from the oppression to han-free life. The process of the liberation here does not seek faith to be successful for competitors but to be just to the oppressed, the han-ridden people.

A cross-cultural ministry in Sherman Oaks is an encounter of the culture of ochlos from Korea and that of the churchgoers of white middle-class America. The encounter often creates different perceptions of Christianity and the Bible which result in somewhat radically different interpretations of faith. In the process of cross-cultural ministry, it seems identifiable that while the culture of ochlos has more emphasis on liberation and justice for the oppressed and poor, that of the white middle-class congregation seems to underline the improvement of what is currently good to an even better pursuit of happiness. For the former, han is a very clear focus by which faith is perceived, developed, and applied into reality, and for the latter, betterment of life seems to be the focus which the ministry is expected to pursue. For a Minjung cultural interpretation of the Bible, to overcome suffering and unjust oppression becomes a major issue in

ministry, while for the white middle-class congregation, to think, act, and interpret Christian faith and the Bible to pursue after a happier journey of faith becomes one of the primary issues in ministry.

Ochlos ministry according to the view of the white middle-class American congregation can be seen as a preoccupied and overly intensified attempt to apply what is taught by Jesus to a reality where there are the oppressed and poor. In the meantime, the white middle-class interpretation of ministry can be perceived as an organized and institutionalized religion which loses the vitality and urgency of the teaching of Jesus as their religion is imprisoned by the cultural codes, norms, and value system. Obviously the difference is visible in cross-cultural ministry, yet the difference is an excellent opportunity for both to adjust their interpretations of faith without imposing one's culture over against another. The adjustment is not a destination but a constant process to make each interpretation presentable for a persuasive communication. The adjustment is not a blind effort to constitute an absolute relativity of faith, but a faithful attempt to understand how Christianity can be interpreted in a cross-cultural dynamic.

A cross-cultural shock can be much absorbed by an interdependent understanding of the different emphases on Christian faith. Reciprocal persuasiveness of different understandings of the core of Christianity has been an

important procedure to make a holistic approach to cross-cultural ministry. The congregation does not demand their minister to give up his ochlos understanding of faith, while the minister persuasively presents the congregation the different option to examine and understand Christianity from a radically different cultural background.

The congregation is to open their minds to learn how the theme of suffering and oppression has been a major resource by which Christians from a history of oppression and suffering understand Christian faith. Being sensitive to the stories of faith from other cultures is one of the crucial needs of the congregation, to listen carefully to the story of suffering and oppression and to work diligently to make a holistic cross-cultural ministry possible. And the different understanding of faith by the Korean-American minister has to be aware of the fact that the transformation of han needs to be presented to and shared with the congregation in a spirit of a cross-cultural persuasion rather than judgement. The encounter between the theology of the pursuit of happiness and that of the transformation of han in a cross-cultural ministerial setting has to be viewed as a constant and reciprocal learning process. This process is possible when the minister and congregation acknowledge that the difference they share is not a problem, but a God-given opportunity to grow in faith cross-culturally and to expand the horizon of their understanding of a global faith.

### Vertical and Horizontal Relationship

Cultural difference in how people relate to one another is found in a cross-cultural setting where the understanding of relationship is different. Democracy and individualism characterize the nature of American society in general. White middle-class people, especially, have a distinct understanding of how one should relate to another. Personal relationship in white middle-class American culture seems to be based upon equality of individuals, and this relationship naturally puts more emphasis on a horizontal relationship between people rather than on a vertical or hierarchical relationship. Freedom and dignity of each and every individual seem to be shared with others equally, and the socio-political efforts to achieve the equality have strongly been witnessed in American history. From the Korean-American minister's perspective, the congregation at Sherman Oaks certainly maintains a horizontal and democratic relationship among themselves in ministry.

In a horizontal and democratic relationship of people, expressive individualism seems to be one of the major trends of American culture. Individualism acknowledges the uniqueness and distinction of each and every individual's cultural value and norm based upon a horizontal or equal relationship with other human beings. Expressive individualism also highlights a democratic relationship of people since it believes in expressing one's own opinion on

an equal basis of personhood. The horizontal orientation of personal relationships has not been developed overnight. It is rather deeply rooted in the influence from romanticism in eighteenth and nineteenth century European and American culture where the individual began to take an important role in society.<sup>20</sup> Today's society, including the one in Sherman Oaks inherits the horizontal orientation of relationship, and it seems correct to say that the relationship is a backbone of the nature of personal relationship in the culture.

A horizontal orientation of personal relationships based upon expressive individualism is highly visible in church leadership. Comparing other ethnic churches, a white middle-class church, such as Sherman Oaks United Methodist Church seems to maintain a more democratic and horizontal relationship between the congregation and its minister. Church administration, pastoral counseling, pastoral visitation, and worship reflect the cultural mentality of the equality of relationship of all individuals of a congregation that a pastoral authority seems to be more democratically viewed than in other ethnic churches. Obviously the Korean-American minister comes from a culture different from that of expressive individualism. And how he perceives the difference between the two cultures is often resourced by the cultural norms and values on the nature of personal relationship in Korea. The process of identifying the difference and of

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<sup>20</sup> Bellah et al., 333-34.

finding a way to adjust his culture on this issue to make an interdependent and mutual communication possible seem to require a time consuming dedication to understand and appreciate the difference in a non-judgemental way and to strive for a cross-cultural and interdependent ministry.

A heavy emphasis on community with a vertical order and discipline of personal relationship in Korean culture is certainly remote from the expressive individualism of white middle-class American culture. Horizontal relationships between people are often limited to a small number of same aged or classed people in the Korean cultural tradition which has grown out of a vertical and status-oriented social discipline throughout the history of the nation. Mostly, the relationship of the people in this nature is rooted in Confucianistic philosophy, which has a heavy emphasis on a vertical respect for elders, parents, and superiors. Confucianism came to Korea from China in the fourth century, and throughout the Yi dynasty (between the sixteenth and nineteenth century) the philosophy became indigenized on Korean soil. Even in the modern Korean society, Confucianism currently plays an important role in terms of cultural values, norms, and forms.<sup>21</sup>

In Confucianism, the concept of harmony of community, and that of heaven and humanity is very important:

The characteristics of ethical norms and values in

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<sup>21</sup> Pong Bae Park, 60.

ontocratic culture is that they are immanent. They originate from the cosmic pattern of unity between heaven and man, and also between man and nature. As radical separation between them is impossible, so no transcendental notion of ethical norm is possible.<sup>22</sup>

This immanent harmony between heaven and humanity, and between humanity and nature is one of the major thoughts of Confucianism, and the harmony becomes visible and concrete by how people relate to one another. Instead of expressive individualism based upon a horizontal relationship, harmony is to be achieved by vertical or hierarchical and communal relationships between people. Ancestor worship which is one of the important examples of this vertical and communal harmony, witnesses how the Korean culture understands the relationship among people.

Shamanism which is a primitive religion of Minjung in Korea, is redated by Confucianism and Mudang is a priest in the religion. The role of the priest in the religion is not only authoritative but is distinctively set aside from the people to exercise the word of god and to call upon the spirit of god in the spiritual reality of Minjung.<sup>23</sup> Mudang does not operate the religious exercise based upon expressive individualistic democracy, but possesses the specially ordained identity of a priest. In Shamanism, the authority of the priesthood is vertically and spiritually related to

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<sup>22</sup> Pong Bae Park, 69.

<sup>23</sup> David Kwang-sun Suh, Theology, Ideology, and Culture, 33.



people, and this trend of understanding survives in Christian churches in Korea so that the authority of the priesthood of Korean Christianity is often exercised in a format of Shamanism.<sup>24</sup>

When a minister from the background of a Christianity with Shamanistic influence meets white middle-class American Christianity built upon expressive individualism, one of the cross-cultural shocks can be found in the issue of the authority of the priesthood. The authority of the priesthood can be translated as one of the equal opportunities to serve the body of Christ according to the culture of expressive individualistic Christianity. In the meantime, the authority according to a vertical and status-oriented discipline can overlook the importance of democratic relationship of people in ministry.

A cross-cultural ministry in this issue should be a place for a mutual education of interdependent growth by recognizing the importance of democratic participation of laity and of priestly authority to proclaim the word and to minister the Holy Sacraments. Interdependent and cross-cultural growth indeed requires a mutual education to understand the different cultural and religious background so that there will be a room for an effective communication, a skill to articulate the differences, and a willingness to adjust and readjust cross-

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<sup>24</sup> David Kwang-sun Suh, Theology, Ideology, and Culture, 32.

culturally without a judgmental attitude.

Practical Ministry of Interculturation  
and Transformation

Awareness of the cultural differences and of the needs for adjustment in cross-cultural ministry above reflects that ministry in general has never been totally free from its culture because it has been an environment of interpretation of faith. Cultural influence on how we receive, interpret, and apply the gospels into our reality cannot be denied because culture as a whole is a framework by which the gospels become alive, vitalized, and applicable. At the same time, culture cannot dictate the content of the gospels, relativizing the truth according to what culture imposes upon truth. It is to say that culture can be a channel through which the truth travels, but it should not change its ultimate intention. There are two prime biblical examples of cultural transformation where the truth goes beyond cultural boundaries.

It seems important to have a biblical guideline for a cross-cultural ministry since the biblical insights on interculturation elucidate how cross-cultural ministry is perceived by the biblical communities. One of the examples, found in John's gospel, talks about the encounter between Jesus and a Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-14). The Samaritan woman was surprised by the fact that a Jewish man

asked her for a drink. Her surprise was a reaction to Jesus' effort to go beyond cultural boundary to share the truth that anyone who drinks the water that was offered by him shall never be thirsty again. In accordance with the cultural custom, norm, and value at that time and place, a Jewish man was not supposed to even talk to a Samaritan woman. This cultural boundary was a cultural imprisonment by which both Jews and Samaritans suffered. The liberation from the prison was declared when Jesus said: "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst" (John 4:13-14, RSV). Jewish and Samaritan cultures encountered one another, and they were transformed to be in harmony with the truth that Jesus offered.

Another example of a cross-cultural transformation is found in Paul's ministry. Paul's ministry was a prime example of a cross-cultural ministry. In his letter to the Romans, he said, "Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry" (Rom. 11:13, RSV). He acknowledged the diversity of cultures of his time. Multicultural society was his ministerial reality, and he was keenly aware of intercultural dynamics. His cross-cultural ministry with the Gentiles was vividly demonstrated in his effort to articulate the fact that the truth of Jesus Christ should not be imprisoned by a cultural norm, code, or value. Throughout his ministry he applied the principle that the interpretation from his own Jewish cultural customs always reflected a cross-

cultural awareness.<sup>25</sup> Paul's ministry was to acknowledge consistently the pluralistic cultures of his time, and to transform them to what was proclaimed by Jesus Christ in the gospels.

A cross-cultural ministry continues this biblical tradition of transformation of the differences of cultures into a holistic and harmonious truth. Differences in cultures are neither to relativize nor to syncretize the truth so that it loses its power, but to transform the difference to a holistic ministry where the message of Christ can be received, articulated, and applied into different cultural contexts. Again, the unique claim of Christian truth is not totally free from cultural influence, and yet it is not shaped by cultural values or norms. A cross-cultural ministry toward a holistic interculturalism in Sherman Oaks United Methodist Church strives for continuation of the tradition of pluralism and transformation. Christianity is examined and appreciated by Korean and white middle class American cultures in the ministry. Out of many different ministerial areas in the ministry, several practical aspects of ministry will be discussed to explain how a cross-cultural ministry happens in praxis and how the vision of holistic interculturalism is perceived by the participants of the ministry.

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<sup>25</sup> Morris A. Inch, Doing Theology Across Cultures (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 27-28.

Leadership in Administration. In the church administration in Sherman Oaks, the minister from Korean culture has his own administrative oughtness which is influenced by Korean cultural understanding of the nature of personal relationship. According to how he has perceived and exercised the pastoral authority in administration in Korea, his leadership style has been formulated and reflected in ministering the church. The congregation, in the meantime, views church administration from its own cultural experiences of oughtness. In the church administration, the difference in the cultural oughtnesses can become a source of administrative disharmony.<sup>26</sup> This oughtness is often a reflection of cultural understanding rather than objective interpretation of an issue. The danger of disharmony surfacing takes place when this oughtness decreases administrative effectiveness in the decision-making process and in dealing with issues and agenda of ministry. Each expectation from the oughtness of the minister and congregation is culturally different one another, and the difference can create a miscommunication in the process of administration. Both the minister and congregation have a task to overcome the potential misunderstanding from different cultural expectations by a mutual effort to accomplish a holistic cross-cultural ministry. The different expectations

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas C. Campbell and Gary B. Reiersen, The Gift of Administration (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 17.

arising from a different oughtness in the intercultural process challenge the ministry to grow, be enlightened and be more cross-culturally sensitive and holistic.

The congregation's expectation of administration is based upon the priesthood of all believers. As a matter of fact, Paul's declaration of the equality in serving the body of Christ seems to be in harmony with the culture of the congregation. The congregation comes from a culture of democracy and expressive individualism so that church administration cannot be monopolized by a pastoral authority. On the otherhand, the Korean-American minister's understanding of church administration has a strong influence from Shamanistic Christianity which allows the priest to claim a divinely anointed privilege to lead the congregation. Generally speaking, a church administration in Korean churches is heavily dependent upon a pastoral leadership rather than on lay leadership. A minister in Korea is viewed as an anointed spiritual leader, a Shaman (priest) who not only has a unique and special authority to preach the word and administer the Holy Sacraments, but also a heavily influential authority in church administration.

The expectation of the cultural oughtness of the minister now encounters an important and valuable opportunity to perceive how the congregation views the priesthood of all believers and how the congregation applies that view to the leadership of administration. This encounter challenges the

Korean-American minister to adjust and redefine pastoral authority. This challenge is vital and practical as the church administration faces a wider and more equal participation of laity in administration than the lay participation in the administration of Korean churches. The adjustment is not an easy process, and it can even be painful if one of the cultural oughtnesses in the administration tries to impose the oughtness of his culture over another.

The Korean-American minister has to learn the value of the democratic virtue of checks and balances in the administration process, and the congregation needs to strive to recognize the uniqueness of the call to ordained ministry. This mutual recognition is possible by voluntary and corporative sharing of the leadership based upon an experience of cultural encounter in ministry toward a holistic transformation. The gift of administration is shared by both the minister and the congregation, and each gift is respected and appreciated by the cross-cultural church administration. The minister has a unique role which should be supported by the congregational leadership, and the leadership of the laity is to be strengthened by the pastoral support.

In the cross-cultural administration process of Sherman Oaks United Methodist Church, it seems to be quite clear that cross-cultural administration is not a matter of proving a cultural superiority over another but an awakening experience to appreciate the role of the minister in support of the

leadership commitment and participation of the congregation. The encounter of the Shamanistic authority of the minister and the expressive individualistic equality of the congregation causes a transformation from the limit of the cultural boundaries to the wholeness of church administration: harmony between the unique role of the minister and the priesthood of all believers.

Preaching. Preaching is another area where a cross-cultural dynamic is witnessed. God's revelation in the human cultural condition is interpreted and proclaimed so that the revelation can become relevant to and understandable for a particular culture. As a matter of fact, the interpretation and proclamation are not isolated from cultural values, norms, and forms, but they are interactive and interdependent. Craddock views the interdynamic of preaching between the revelational and cultural mode, that is, how we communicate the revelation within the condition, context, or environment of the revelation.

[P]reaching is understood as making present and appropriate to the hearers the revelation of God. Here revelation is used not in the sense of content, although content is certainly there, but in the sense of mode. If preaching is in any way a continuation into the present of God's revelation, then what we are doing and how we are doing it should be harmonious with our understanding of the mode of revelation.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Fred B. Craddock, Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 51.



The mode of revelation is interconnected with the culture of hearers. A thorough understanding of the culture is an indispensable tool for an effective preaching because preaching is a culturally reciprocal and mutual event between a preacher and congregation. The culture of the congregation should be well understood by a preacher to maximize the effectiveness of contextualization of the truth from the revelation, and a congregation should be aware of the culture of a preacher that they may increase their understanding as a preacher proclaims the message from his/her own cultural perspectives.<sup>28</sup>

As a preacher interprets and proclaims the revelation, people from different cultural backgrounds may have different ears to hear the same message. Ruth and Ezra-Nehemiah have different views on a foreign preacher, and the chronicler and the writers of Kings and Samuel have different interpretations on the life of David. Peter and Paul have different understandings as to how the gospels of Jesus should be shared with the Gentiles.<sup>29</sup> It is obvious that the communication of the revelation is constantly influenced by how culture shapes the hearers' perspectives of faith and life in general.

Yet a preacher has to focus on the power of the word which goes beyond cultural boundary. Even if the listeners

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas G. Long, The Witness of Preaching (Louisville: Westminster, John Knox, 1989), 27-28.

<sup>29</sup> Craddock, 117.

of the proclaimed word are somewhat limited by their culture, when a preacher proclaims the word something happens which is able to embrace cultural differences and transform them into pluralistic wholeness. Despite the difference of cultures, languages, and ethnicity, the word, as it is proclaimed, has a power to transform the life of the listeners in their particular and definite culture.<sup>30</sup> This power of the proclaimed word validates the possibility and vitality of a cross-cultural preaching. A holistic cross-cultural transformation beyond cultural boundaries is often witnessed through the stories of biblical cross-cultural examples.<sup>31</sup>

Cross-cultural preaching in the Sherman Oaks United Methodist Church continues the tradition of cross-cultural preaching from the Bible. Preaching as a communication of the word is a culturally reciprocal event between a preacher and congregation. In Sherman Oaks, the cross-cultural preaching has been an ongoing process of mutually learning the differences of the cultures. For the preacher, it is essential to learn constantly about the culture of the middle-class American. Likewise the congregation puts an effort into understanding the cultural background of the Korean-American preacher. This mutual effort has enhanced the level of cross-cultural understanding so that the preaching has been accurately understood, and both the preacher and congregation

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<sup>30</sup> Long, 33.

<sup>31</sup> Inch, 27-29.

are able to communicate the truth more clearly. In cross-cultural preaching, the different cultural interpretations of Christian faith out of one's own culture can be shared and appreciated, deepening and widening the journey of faith cross-culturally and globally. Therefore, the difference shared is to be perceived not as a problem but as a God-given opportunity to expand the horizon of faith and to grow more by learning and affirming the universality of the Good News.

Cross-cultural preaching requires additional effort of communication. Cross-cultural preaching is an attempt to witness the presence of divine power to transform the different cultures to the wholeness of the Good News. This transformation is a lot more than a mere exchange of information as it strives for the wholeness of the life of the communicators of the word.<sup>32</sup> Transformation by cross-cultural preaching at Sherman Oaks is possible by faithful, interdependent, and intercultural communication. One of the tools for transformation is a mutual linguistic sensitivity in order to understand what is said from the pulpit and from the pew. This sensitivity is an additional effort needed to increase the effectiveness of communication, since their native languages are different. In addition, an intentional attention to detect and learn the different cultural customs is required to eliminate the possibility of misunderstanding

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<sup>32</sup> Charles H. Kraft, Communication Theory for Christian Witness (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 58-59.

and to increase the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication.

The preacher comes from a culture of suffering and han. Korea as the minister's cultural background has endured an enormous amount of suffering throughout her history which accumulated han, a feeling of defeat, resignation, and nothingness, and because of the cultural background of suffering and han, the preaching at Shermans Oaks tends to focus on the theme of redemption from suffering and liberation from han. For the preacher, his cultural background influences how he interprets the Bible and how he proclaims a message according to the cultural impact of han.

For the congregation from a white middle-class American culture, it may be hard for them to deal consistently with the issue of redemption from suffering and liberation from han because their culture is not so much rooted in suffering and han. Rather, they want to hear more about positive interpretations of the Bible around the theme of celebrating how God has blessed them. Thus, for the congregation, the theme of grace and thanksgiving seem to be more dominant than that of redemption and liberation. There has been an effort to adjust and to balance the theme of preaching as both respect the value of the cultural emphasis. Both experience a transformation process where the preacher learns more about the theme of grace and thanksgiving as the congregation hears what the theme of redemption and liberation can do for their

faith journey. The adjustment process reveals again that the difference is not a problem but a valuable opportunity to transform their faith to be more holistic and balanced. This opportunity can be realized when both parties are willing to listen, change, grow, and be open to potential opportunity to transform their lives to wholeness.

Worship. Worship is a focal point of ministry. When a congregation gathers together to praise and glorify God, there is a sense of God's presence in the midst of the community of faith. An ordained minister has a responsibility to be sensitive to what theme of worship should be employed, according to the need of a congregation. And the theme of worship should be communicable to the congregation. In fact, a minister is set aside for worship with major responsibility to make it meaningful and productive. Ideology, norm, and value systems may vary according to the difference of cultures, but worship is a "graced response through symbolic activities that celebrate God."<sup>33</sup> Symbolic activities to respond to the grace of God may have different methodologies according to different cultural interpretations. But throughout the Christian tradition in the presence of many different cultures, an ordained minister continues an apostolic tradition to lead the community of faith in worship.

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<sup>33</sup> John E. Burkhart, Worship (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 28.

The apostolic tradition preserves an apostolic authority as a focal point of worship so that he/she proclaims the word and administers the Holy Sacraments according to the commission assigned by Christ.<sup>34</sup>

A Shamanistic Christian understanding of the Korean-American minister takes a ministerial role in worship very seriously. As discussed above, in Shamanism, a priest has an important role to form a bridge between divinity and humanity. A priest has the authority to guide, facilitate, and conduct worship for he/she is set aside for that specific reason. Korean Christianity with Shamanistic leverage still has an influence on the Korean-American minister as he leads worship in the white middle-class congregation. This influence should not cause one to overlook the importance of lay participation and leadership in worship, and the minister's unique role as a bearer of what is holy and should not monopolize the dynamics of worship but rather share the leadership of worship with laity.

In fact, to have a vital and dynamic worship, a service should not be a series of disconnected stages that occur one after another. Worship must have a consistent theme set by the need of a holistic ministry by both minister and congregation, and the theme should be communicable to everyone

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<sup>34</sup> John H. Westerhoff, III and William H. Willimon, Liturgy and Learning through the Life Cycle (New York: Seabury, 1980), 77-78.

who takes part in worship.<sup>35</sup> Worship should neither be done solely in a spirit of equal opportunity of expressive individualism nor be led by a hierarchical and monopolized authority of a minister. Rather, worship should be a graced response of people to praise and glorify God and to celebrate God's presence in the midst of the community of faith. Worship as a communal event requires an interactive participation from the leadership of lay and ordained ministry.

Each Sunday morning worship at Sherman Oaks becomes a worshipful event for the interaction of the different cultures. The different cultural interpretations of worship are visible in terms of how to pray, sing, and share the word, and to explain the difference in detail might not be possible in this project, but the difference, in summary, is a constant reminder of who they are and who they can become through the cross-cultural ministry--an unusual opportunity for cultural wholeness.

Pastoral Care. Another crucial aspect of a cross-cultural ministry from the experience at Sherman Oaks is pastoral care. Pastoral care, in general, is the utilization of persons in the ministry in person to person or small group relationships, so that a person may experience healing

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<sup>35</sup> Kennon L. Callahan, Twelve Keys to an Effective Church (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 29.

empowerment and holistic growth in a relationship.<sup>36</sup> Pastoral care, therefore, is a shared experience between pastor and congregation, not an isolated and independent event. Whether pastoral care takes place in one-to-one or group relationship, it is always a reciprocal and interdependent activity. Especially when this pastoral care happens in a cross-cultural ministry, a keen awareness of cultural interdependence and wholeness is a fundamental basis for productive pastoral care.

The relationship of pastoral care should take the cross-cultural context very seriously because it does not occur in a vacuum, but rather as a constant interaction between different cultures. Modernism which is one of the current cultural phenomena in America is "characterized by the aggregate effect of the rise of modern science, technology, the differentiation of labor, secularization, and the loss of transcendence."<sup>37</sup> From the cultural process of the aggregated effect of secularization and the loss of transcendence, a sense of brokenness and segregation between different cultures becomes a part of the modern American context. Brokenness from God and among the different cultures and ethnic groups becomes one of the most challenging events for cross-cultural

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<sup>36</sup> Howard Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 25-26.

<sup>37</sup> Nelson S. T. Thayer, Spirituality and Pastoral Care, Theology and Pastoral Care, no. 9 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 15-16.



pastoral care.

White middle-class Christians are one of the most victimizing groups of imperialism, as a result of oppressive Christian dualism. European and North American history and theology has been producing brokenness in humanity by developing cultural and theological imperialism and Christian dualism in the past, and most white middle-class Christians come from this cultural background. Christian dualism is a hierarchical dualism where a self-identity is developed to monopolize what is positive and good. Separation between God, a totally other God, and the sinful world is projected to a relationship between a monopolized and imperialistic self-identity and others who are victimized and oppressed by subjugation. Christian imperialism is based upon this hierarchical and dualistic interpretation of the dualism. The dualism justifies Christianizing or civilizing others without recognizing the integrity and dignity of different cultural values, norms, and beliefs.<sup>38</sup> This Christian dualism has been one of the theological grounds for prejudice and racism against non-white ethnic communities and women.

When an immigrant pastor from Korea ministers to a white middle-class American congregation, a cross-cultural encounter occurs between the dominant cultural and ethnic group, and the representative from a marginalized culture, which has been

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<sup>38</sup> David L. Shields, Growing Beyond Prejudices (Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-third Publications, 1986), 17-18.

oppressed by the cultural imperialism and Christian dualism. The congregation of the Sherman Oaks United Methodist Church is far from hierarchical dualism and Christian imperialism, but they share a part of this extremely negative influence as a white middle-class congregation in the eyes of the Korean-American minister. When a cross-cultural pastoral care happens in this setting, the encounter between the cultures is not a place to prove one's superiority but an interdependent ministry to mutually learn and grow into pluralistic wholeness.

One of the challenges that the cross-cultural pastoral care has to deal with is the issue of prejudice. The pastoral care context at Sherman Oaks is not only a cross-cultural event but an interracial one. The pastoral care often includes the problem of racism, a subtle and dark side of human brokenness, which either condones or even encourages prejudice against another race. Therefore, prejudice based upon racism has to be scrutinized and studied with special pastoral attention. Certainly racial prejudice reflects a deep and dark negativism of human brokenness for a number of reasons.

1. Prejudices are based on a pattern of experience that is hierarchical and dualistic.
2. Prejudices reflect a desire to control the uncertainties of life.
3. Prejudices buttress the self-esteem of the prejudiced person.
4. Prejudices reinforce the current distribution of social power.
5. Sexism is foundational for other forms of prejudice.

6. Different prejudices are related.
7. Prejudices are buttressed by adaptable stereotypes.
8. Prejudices reflect moral distortion.
9. Prejudices achieve stability through irrational psychodynamics.
10. Prejudices are justified by appeal to ultimate criteria.
11. Prejudices have negative psychological consequences for both the "oppressor" and the "oppressed."
12. Prejudices have physical consequences.<sup>39</sup>

There must be a lot longer list of how prejudice can damage the society. When what prejudice invalidates in the ministry is carelessly overlooked, a cross-cultural and interracial ministry can lose its fundamental basis for pastoral care because prejudice negates any type of integral communication between different cultures and races. The minister's attempt to provide care for the congregation can be nullified if prejudice is present in their relationship and if the process of pastoral care is constantly damaged by prejudice.

The list above can be summarized by saying that prejudice causes the human sinful condition, brokenness, and separation. Prejudice ultimately can destroy human potentiality to grow and be mature. It truly needs God's grace to awaken our conscious and unconscious prejudice against others so that the church and its community can witness the vitality of the grace which enables them to be pluralistic and whole. Cross-cultural pastoral care, in this sense, has a greater

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<sup>39</sup> Shields, 151.

opportunity to proclaim the uniting grace of God despite the difference of cultures, language, and race. The witness of the uniting grace happens in the cross-cultural ministry and pastoral care for several reasons, but two major ones seem to be most important.

Cross-cultural pastoral care, such as that in Sherman Oaks, is possible because of an affirmation that Christian faith is distinct from the ideology accepted by a particular culture. The Bible as the central resource of faith is taken from different cultures, and yet it encourages humanity to be challenged to an interdependence between different cultures.

Biblical material is relative to its culture and yet, almost paradoxically, is our ultimate norm. The Bible is the record of the ideologies that various communities in different times and circumstances formed to make concrete their faith in the living God. For contemporary Christians, it is through these biblical ideologies that one learns how to create new ideologies in openness to the Spirit.<sup>40</sup>

This openness to the Spirit is a basic tool for cross-cultural pastoral care. With a willingness to learn reciprocally, the minister and the congregation can open a genuine conversation to make interdependent healing and growth possible. The openness to the Spirit for cross-cultural pastoral care promotes cross-cultural understanding so that the interaction between the different cultures can increase the efficiency of the care.

Cross-cultural pastoral care is also possible because of

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<sup>40</sup> Shields, 140.

anthropological faith. Anthropological faith is to acknowledge and appreciate the diversity of the cultural context, and to "trust in the person or persons who provide a model or witness to what life lived according to these values is like,"<sup>41</sup> and these values are centered around faith which sees the value of each and every human being equally and holistically. This faith is not preoccupied by a particular ideology or culture, but is loyal to the value of the dignity of the difference shared by each and every human being. The cross-cultural pastoral care should be practiced in the spirit of the anthropological faith so that the Korean-American minister's culture is not forced to be assimilated by the congregation, and the culture of the congregation is not threatened by the presence of the minister's different cultural ideology. In the process of pastoral care, however, there should be a keen awareness of this difference, a willingness to understand, and an effort to transform any situation that needs to be cared for, healed or made whole.

Cross-cultural pastoral care deals with the whole aspect of human experience, such as grief, crisis, marriage, and family life. Details on how-to's for pastoral care are not going to be mentioned here, but all different aspects of care in a cross-cultural ministry are undergirded by an attempt to be aware of the difference of cultural norms, forms, and values. Furthermore, this awareness is the intrinsic ground

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<sup>41</sup> Shields, 136.

for an effective communication so that pastoral care, as an interdependently cross-cultural event, can introduce the wholeness from the brokenness which needs care. Cross-cultural pastoral care, indeed, is a culturally interactive event to witness how diversified people can support one another by nurturing and encouraging them to be fully interdependent, liberated, and whole.

## CHAPTER 5

## Conclusion: Call to A Cross-cultural Ministry

Cross-cultural Ministry as Crisis Ministry

Christianity is undisputedly interwoven with many cultures in the history of faith communities. Both the Old and New Testament witness the vitality of multicultural interactions which became a place for different cultural interpretations of the revelation of God in the context of biblical communities. From the story of the old Hebrew culture to the first century Jewish community, it is very clear that a particular culture cannot be completely isolated from others. As a matter of fact, the cross-cultural interactions in the biblical history which often caused the struggles and crises for cross-cultural understanding and adjustment, occupy good portions of the book. However, the struggles and crises also provided the church and its history with a fundamental basis for the growth of humanity of many different cultures into a holistic incarnation of interdependence and harmonious co-existence.

As much as Christianity is contextual and influenced by culture, it is universally redemptive and salvific to all races and cultures. Christian faith with cross-cultural sensitivity recognizes the pluralism of human family with multiculturedness, and faith has power to authenticate what is unique to a culture and to transform the differences of a pluralistic community to constitute a holistic, harmonious,

and common identity as Christian. Therefore, Christianity cannot be fully understood if a culture tries to monopolize it by imposing its own cultural oughtness upon other cultures whose cultural experience is different. This imposition of oughtness can prevent a culture from interacting with others, and this prevention can increase the brokenness in humanity. History has plenty of unfortunate experiences of brokenness as the world has overlooked the importance of interdependence and pluralistic wholeness. Hatred, war, and socio-political and economic exploitation are parts of the brokenness along with other negative experiences that the world has experienced.

A cross-cultural ministry has an important task which is crucial for the future of Christianity and the world. As cross-cultural ministries were vital throughout the history of the biblical communities, contemporary cross-cultural ministry is not a new attempt but a continuous presence in the history of Christianity with a sense of renewal and refreshment of what was offered in the tradition of Christianity. The complexity of a contemporary cross-cultural ministry is not avoidable as society and its culture now change much more rapidly than ever. But there seems to be an unchanging task of the ministry which is to witness God's unfailing love beyond the boundaries of different cultures.

God's unfailing love beyond the boundaries of cultural differences calls a cross-cultural ministry to remind the



people of God that they are created in each culture not to be isolated, independent, or imperialistic but to be interconnected or interdependent. Southern California and the rest of the parishes in the world need to be sensitive to the challenge of the changing society which experiences a rapid process of diversification of cultures and races. The rapid process of diversification assumes a drastic change, and the change introduces a crisis. Therefore, a cross-cultural ministry is a crisis ministry which is not afraid of changes of its parishes. Rather the ministry embraces changes as an opportunity to expand the horizon of ministry. For a cross-cultural ministry, this crisis is not a threat or problem but a culturally and theologically enriching experience of self-criticism and growth.

#### Cross-cultural Ministry as Contextual Ministry

Every conceivable ministry is contextual. It is virtually impossible to minister to a community without a contextual interpretation of Christian faith according to a particular cultural experience. One of the most important tasks of a cross-cultural ministry, therefore, is to heed the nature, make-up, and need of the community for which the ministry exists and serves. Without a faithful understanding of how the community is formed and developed, a cross-cultural ministry loses ground needed by those who need to hear the Good News. When a parish is culturally diverse and

pluralistic, ministry has to be sensitive to cross-cultural dynamics and has to be able to provide cross-cultural understanding and vision for holistic interdependence between different cultures.

Socio-anthropological studies, socio-economic and political research, and intercultural theological interpretation are required to be scrutinized by a cross-cultural ministry to maximize its pastoral capacity. A fundamental understanding of culture will provide a cross-cultural ministry with a very efficient tool to articulate cross-cultural dynamics, and this ability to articulate will open a channel to interculturalization of the parishes. This fundamental understanding should also include the different options of interculturalization such as cultural absolutism, relativism, and pluralism, since these options will give a cross-cultural ministry confidence to choose a holistic vision for the community of cultural diversity.

Participants in a cross-cultural ministry, such as ministers and laity have to dedicate their energy to equip themselves to be sensitive to and knowledgeable of the changes of their parishes. The diversification of cultures, especially, will require an intentional research of social science which can offer a great deal of access to the method of a cross-cultural ministry.<sup>1</sup> The survival growth of a

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<sup>1</sup>James D. Whitehead and Evelyn E. Whitehead, Method in Ministry (New York: Seabury, 1980), 71.

ministry which is in the midst of active cross-cultural dynamics is not possible without serious research of the cultures and their interactions. Understanding the context of parishes should be one of the fundamental steps toward a holistic and realistic cross-cultural ministry.

### Cross-cultural Ministry as Doing Theology

The praxis of the ministry is always intertwined with a contemplative theological articulation. Theology, as an attempt to interpret the interrelational dynamics between God and humanity, presents the ministry a means to "do" what the theology has been able to articulate by observing the reality of faith community. A cross-cultural ministry has to learn a painful history, based upon dualistic, independent, and imperialistic theology in the past, and to look for a viable theological option to reinforce what the ministry is called to do.

Process theology has valuable thoughts for the ministry in terms of its emphasis on interdependence and permeability of different entities. Autochthonous theology contributes to the ministry with voluntary interaction between different cultures, maintaining one's own cultural uniqueness and authenticity. The theology of Han presents the importance of harmony between one-ness and many-ness. These different theological observations, with regard to a cross-cultural ministry, are the reflections of the praxis of doing theology

in a different cultural context and experience. These theological reflections represent the diverse expressions of how a cross-cultural ministry can do theology amid the presence of different cultures. Each and every local congregation whose ministerial context is cross-cultural has to articulate a theology of cross-cultural ministry and apply that theology in the doing of ministry.

### Suggestions and Visions for Cross-cultural Ministry

The studies of the dynamics of a multicultural context, the pluralistic theology, and the praxis of a cross-cultural ministry suggest a practical and theological guideline for churches which might need a keen awareness of cultural diversity in their parishes. Whether the churches experiences the diversity and its cross-cultural dynamics between a pastor and congregation or between fellow congregants, there are a few fundamental items that they have to understand if they envision a pluralistic wholeness in their parishes.

### We Are As We Are

As indicated earlier, a ministry toward a cross-cultural wholeness consists of authenticity and integration, uniqueness and unity of different cultures. In the praxis of cross-cultural ministry, integration and unity of different cultures should not overlook the importance of authenticity and uniqueness of each and every different culture within the

community of a multicultural congregation. Each and every culture is rooted in its own local tradition and circumstance so that any cross-cultural attempt to bring about a harmony between different cultures should be based upon a serious acknowledgement of the local rootedness of each culture.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, cross-cultural wholeness through a local church ministry or otherwise will not be possible if the church fails to facilitate a room for cultural uniqueness and cross-cultural interaction within the ministry.

Keeping and developing one's unique cultural tradition are very important in a cross-cultural ministry for two reasons. One of them is that, without an intentional effort to acknowledge and appreciate a unique cultural identity of minor cultural groups of the congregation, a major culture might be tempted to impose its culture upon others so that the majority of the church enforces uniformity of culture, instead of unity.<sup>3</sup> The space to keep and appreciate the different cultural identities within congregation is very important because, without it, a major culture will

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<sup>2</sup>Robert J. Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1985), 75-76.

<sup>3</sup>Uniformity here is used to indicate any unilateral form of culture which demands others to copy the content of the culture of majority. Unity, however, means a connectedness and harmony of the difference of cultures that highlights oneness, yet never destroys the existence and integrity of authenticity of the different cultural identity. The author of this project refines the meanings of the words to explain the difference between cross-cultural oneness with the harmony of difference and with domination of one culture over another.

consciously or unconsciously be imperialistic against others.

Use of language, worship, person-to-person relationships, and other life of the church have to be intentional in terms of making sure the authenticity of the different cultural identities is carefully protected and secured within the ministry. The intentionality is crucial for the ministry for the second reason that the church has to secure a space for cultural authenticity. Without acknowledging and appreciating the different cultural authenticity or identity of others, raising a consciousness of the presence of the different cultural identities within a congregation cannot be done affirmatively. When the church offers an affirmative atmosphere for everyone to present him/her as he/she is to others with a confidence in his/her cultural identity, the church is ready to deal with a pluralistic ministry within the congregation and beyond.

#### The Church with a Growth Pain of Adjustment

A cross-cultural ministry never happens without this important process, a journey through a joyous pain. If the church has secured a livable space for the different identities, whether they are majority or minority, to present themselves as they are, and if she has intentionally raised the congregational consciousness of the presence of the different cultural identities in an affirmative way, then, she is ready to suffer. The suffering from the process of

cultural adjustment is a growth pain which forecasts a growth into a cultural wholeness.

Mutual understanding between the congregants from the different cultural authenticities requires a patience to learn the differences without prompt judgement. To learn different cultural gestures, rituals, customs, communications, value system, and norms demands from the students a lot of intentional effort to set aside their culture for a moment to learn the difference without their cultural bias. There might be a time of feeling awkward and abnormal when learning and adjustment are happening. In the process of interculturalization, a transgression of cultural boundaries of different cultures is likely to occur.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes one has to voluntarily give up what he/she usually does in his/her own culture when he/she creates time and space for cultural adjustment to co-exist and grow together with others. All of these processes might be somewhat inconvenient, but they are essential to achieve a cross-cultural wholeness. They are a part of the growth pains which introduces maturity.

The growth pains will be a critical thought for churches in a rapidly changing multicultural society. Mono-cultural maintenance of the modern churches in a urban setting seems to be no longer possible or valid. It seems likely that the church has to have a willingness to appreciate the different cultural identities, and to embrace the growth pains to adjust

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<sup>4</sup>Schreiter, 73.

and grow with other cultures interdependently. Evangelism cannot be possible if the church is to invite people and to impose her culture upon theirs. Efficiency of cross-cultural ministry depends upon the willingness of the church to accept the growth pains and to grow interdependently.

### Ministry of Authenticity and Plurality

Cross-cultural wholeness should not advocate a cultural syncretism or relativism. Recognition of the presence of cultural diversity is not to lead a cross-cultural ministry to a purposeless effort. Interdependent cultural adjustment does not demolish the authenticity of Christianity. Unity and integration of different cultures does not endorse cultural relativism which does not offer a universal value system for different cultural communities. Christian cultural wholeness does not hesitate to present Christ as the center of every culture's authentic interpretation. Therefore, unity and integration of different cultures in a cross-cultural ministry are based upon the fundamental claim that the life and ministry of Christ Jesus are the encompassing truth of the ministry.

The church in a cross-cultural ministerial context will have to be aware of the necessity of pluralistic ministry, yet, she never has to give up what constitutes the existence and purpose of her ministry. Appreciation of uniqueness of each and every different culture is valid when the uniqueness



is identified within the framework of God's redemptive work in Christ. Cultural adjustment is not to be viewed as a way to cultural and religious syncretism but to be used to expand the horizon of faith found in the diversified oneness in Christ.<sup>5</sup> Cultural interdependence, therefore, is not destined to cultural relativism but to authentic Christian faith which encompasses and embraces all of the uniqueness from different cultures.

A cross-cultural ministry reaffirms the harmony between being authentic and integral in cultural wholeness. A cross-cultural ministry encourages and guides the community of faith to foretaste the kingdom of God here in a multicultural society by envisioning interdependence and wholeness of the differences that humanity shares. The cross-cultural ministry recognizes the presence of the differences of cultures and races, and yet, remains confident that the power of the salvific message of Christian faith will transform the differences into wholeness in the image of God shared by each and every human being. The ministry endorses Peter's realization, "I now realize that it is true that God treats all men and women on same basis. Whoever fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God, no matter what race one belongs to" (Acts 10:34-35, TEV).

A cross-cultural ministry is a vision-producing ministry for the world broken by segregation amongst cultures and

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<sup>5</sup>Schreiter, 102.

racess, by cultural absolutism, and by prejudice from cultural imperialism. The cross-cultural ministry at Sherman Oaks may be a small example of what humanity can do, and certainly, the pastor and congregation are beginning to realize the power of holistic transformation of the Good News despite their cultural and racial differences. Their struggle for cultural authentication and integration is not a sign of problems but a constant reminder that there is an abundant opportunity for humanity to grow and mature into wholeness.

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